ORAL HEALTH CARE FOR PATIENTS UNDERGOING CANCER THERAPY

Speaker: JoAnn Gurenlian RDH, PhD

Course Objectives:

• Recognize that a diagnosis of cancer is different for each individual.

• Identify chemotherapeutic options for patients undergoing cancer treatment.

• Describe the oral health manifestations associated with a weakened immune system from cancer therapy.

• Discuss oral health protocols that will reduce morbidity and mortality associated with cancer treatment.

• Identify resources for health professionals and cancer patients.

CODA Standards:

• 2-8d Dental hygiene science content must include oral health education and preventive counseling, health promotion, patient management, clinical dental hygiene, provision of services for and management of patients with special needs, community dental/oral health, medical and dental emergencies, legal and ethical aspects of dental hygiene practice, infection and hazard control management, and the provision of oral health care services to patients with bloodborne infectious diseases

• 2-13 Graduates must be competent in providing the dental hygiene process of care which includes:

  a) comprehensive collection of patient data to identify the physical and oral health status;

  b) analysis of assessment findings and use of critical thinking in order to address the patient's dental hygiene treatment needs;

  c) establishment of a dental hygiene care plan that reflects the realistic goals and treatment strategies to facilitate optimal oral health;

  d) provision of patient-centered treatment and evidence-based care in a manner minimizing risk and optimizing oral health;
Course Details

e) measurement of the extent to which goals identified in the dental hygiene care plan are achieved;

f) complete and accurate recording of all documentation relevant to patient care

Canadian Competency:

• A6. Respect the autonomy of clients as full partners in decision-making.

• A7. Evaluate clients’ health and oral health status using determinants of health and risk assessment to make appropriate referral(s) to other health care professionals.

• B9. Work with clients, family members, substitute decision makers and stakeholders to assess, diagnose, plan, implement and evaluate services for clients.

• F14. Provide recommendations in regard to clients’ ongoing care including referrals when indicated.

Additional Faculty Resources:


• Download handout from course for review

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Classroom Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the myths dental professionals may have about cancer patients.
2. Discuss the 3 phases of Cancer Therapy: Pretreatment, during cancer therapy, and post treatment.
3. Discuss the treatment of the oral complications of cancer therapy. Including mucositis, herpes, and fungal infections.

Classroom Activities for Additional Learning:

1. Assign students different oral complications and have them present findings on treatments for these complications.
2. Review the handout from the course and the table of chemotherapy medications.
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Exam Questions:

1. Tobacco and obesity are the two main cancer causing factors.
   
   A. True
   
   B. False

   Answer: A

   Rationale: One third of cancers have tobacco as a risk factor and one third are associated with obesity.

2. List at least 6 side effects of chemotherapy.

   Answer:

   1. Deep vein thrombosis
   2. Nausea/vomiting
   3. Anorexia
   4. Renal insufficiency
   5. Marrow suppression
   6. Hair loss
   7. Diarrhea
   8. Gingivitis
   9. Mucositis/stomatitis
   10. Vision changes
   11. Watery eyes
12. Photophobia
13. Taste changes
14. Low blood counts
15. Rash/hives
16. Itching
17. Bone, joint, muscle pain
18. Difficulty breathing or swallowing