

Nursing Care for the Older Cancer Patient

It is predicted that by the year 2030, 20% of the population will be 65 and older and 70% of all cancer patients will be in this age group. Currently, approximately 40% of the patients admitted to MSKCC are older than 65 and the inpatient population at this NCI-designated cancer center is over 65. These patients, on average, have a higher incidence of multiple diseases, higher rates of adverse events and re-admissions, and longer hospital stays. At MSKCC the percentage of patients aged 65 and older has risen from 36% in 2009 to 40% in 2012. In addition, the average length of stay in the hospital for patients over 65 has risen from 5.7 days in 2011 to 5.9 days in 2012.

Programs to care for this growing population must be a top focus at cancer centers. Our center has successfully obtained and maintained its designation as a NICHE (Nurses Improving Care of Health-System Elders) hospital and adapted the Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) model to address the unique needs of older patients with cancer. We are also developing tools and guidelines to assess our older patients in the outpatient setting.

What Is NICHE?

- NICHE is a program initially developed by the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing at New York University College of Nursing. Its goal is to achieve nursing change that will benefit hospitalized older patients through exemplary geriatric-sensitive care.
- The NICHE program started in 1992, and it has evolved into a national geriatric nursing program comprising more than 270 hospitals in more than 40 states.
- MSKCC was the first NCI-designated cancer center to achieve NICHE designation.

The GRN Model

- GRNs are unit-based registered nurses who acquire competency in the care of older adults through educational programs, consultation, and monthly meetings implemented by the Geriatric Nurse Practitioner.
- Staff nurses throughout the hospital may choose to become GRNs after participating in a two-day continuing educational program



MSKCC's geriatric resource nurses

called "Advancing Nursing Expertise in the Care Management of Older Adults with Cancer." This is a multidisciplinary course offered at MSKCC, designed to educate oncology nurses about the special needs of geriatric oncology patients. It covers topics in age-related physiologic changes, carcinogenesis, advanced-care planning, geriatric pharmacologic issues, effects of cancer on nutritional status and the nutritional needs of cancer patients, depression and anxiety, pain management and palliative care issues, as well as physical and occupational therapy. Those nurses who wish to become GRNs then participate in an additional day of training. The first group of GRNs completed training in June 2009. To date 13 RNs from nine different units of Memorial Hospital are GRNs.

continued on page 2

EDITORIAL STAFF

Manpreet K. Boparai, PharmD
Stephanie Goodman, DO
Beatriz Korc-Grodzicki, MD, PhD

SUPPORT THE 65+ PROGRAM

If you would like to make a tax-deductible gift to support MSKCC's 65+ Program, please call 646-888-3154.

ABOUT THE 65+ PROGRAM

A diagnosis of cancer is difficult at any age, but older patients face unique challenges. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center is committed to providing cancer patients aged 65 and older with the treatment and support they need. The 65+ Program offers the services of a multidisciplinary geriatric team, including physicians, clinical nurse specialists, social workers, nutritionists, pharmacists, and psychiatrists, as well as members of the Pain and Palliative Care Service and the Integrative Medicine Service. The programs and care provided focus on the unique needs of cancer patients aged 65 years and older.

If you would like more information about the 65+ Program or a referral to one of our team members, please call 646-888-4741.

Active GRNs by floor:

Eileen Collins (M5)
Pamela Harris (M8)
Cathy Finlayson (M10)
Alysha Lawson (M12)
Patrice Mockler (M15)
Denise Rulow (M15)
Nina Sohn-Bachman (M16)
Stephanie McEneaney (M16)
Melody DeSanto (M17)
Michelle Cavuoto (M17)
Sarah Fellhauer (M19)
Sue Derby (Pain and Palliative Care)
Heidi Yulico (Geriatrics/NICHE Coordinator)

continued from page 1

Geriatric Nursing in the Outpatient Setting

As the delivery of cancer care shifts from the hospital to the outpatient setting, ambulatory nurses and support staff must be adequately educated and trained to meet the specialized needs of older adults undergoing cancer treatment. Our clinical leaders in the ambulatory nursing department are currently working on the following:

- Adapting the inpatient GRN model to the ambulatory care setting
- Developing a tool for ambulatory oncology nurses to assess the older adult and successfully identify patients experiencing and/or at risk for geriatric syndromes such as falls, failure to thrive, frailty, delirium, incontinence, and/or polypharmacy
- Developing appropriate strategies to improve ambulatory patients' ability to tolerate cancer treatment

65+ Team Member Spotlight:

Carol Koehne graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing and began her career at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, in Boston, where she was part of the bone marrow transplant team of nurses on the clinical research unit. She went on to work in open heart intensive care at the New England Deaconess Hospital for several years until she joined MSKCC.

Carol's experience at Memorial Sloan-Kettering has been very extensive. She has worked in the collaborative practices of hematology, solid



Carol Koehne, RN

tumor, and pulmonary as well as in the chemotherapy unit. In 2010 she joined the geriatric practice. Carol is committed to providing optimal nursing care to each patient, tailoring it to individual physical, emotional, cultural, and disease-specific needs. Her personal goals are to provide a sense of hope and trust to each geriatric patient and his or her caregiver and to support them through their difficult journey at MSKCC.

Kathy Romano is a registered nurse working in the outpatient geriatric clinic at MSKCC. She graduated from Saint Vincent's School of Nursing and the College of Mount Saint Vincent with a BSN degree in nursing. Kathy has more than 30 years of nursing



Kathy Romano, RN

experience, working for the majority of her career as an inpatient nurse at St. Vincent's Hospital, where she was the Assistant Nursing Care Coordinator on the Acute Care of Elders (ACE) unit. She was the clinical preceptor and performance improvement liaison for the ACE unit, helping to develop multiple interventions to minimize falls risk, among other quality projects.

Currently, Kathy is an office practice nurse in the geriatric outpatient clinic. Kathy has a true passion and strong commitment to nursing care for the older adult. She feels that with respect and sometimes humor she is able, in a small way, to make a lasting difference in the lives of older patients.

Lectures/Workshops 65+Program Upcoming Events

Physical Therapy and
Wellness Workshop
Featuring Department of
Rehabilitation staff

When and Where:

Tuesday, October 8, 2013

10 AM–2 PM

1275 York Ave (at 68th Street),
Room M107

No registration required.

For more information, please call

646-888-4741