

The Relationships among Self-Efficacy, Critical Thinking and Communication Skills Ability in Oncology Nurses for Cancer Immunotherapy in Taiwan

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Abstract : Cancer is the main cause of death worldwide. With advances in medical technology, immunotherapy, which is a newly developed advanced treatment, is currently a crucial cancer treatment option. For better quality cancer care, the ability to communicate and critical thinking plays a central role in clinical oncology settings. However, few studies have explored the impact of communication skills on immunotherapy-related issues and their related factors. This study was to (i) explore the current status of communication skill ability for immunotherapy-related issues, self-efficacy for immunotherapy-related care, and critical thinking ability; and (ii) identify factors related to communication skill ability. This is a cross-sectional study. Oncology nurses were recruited from the Taiwan Oncology Nursing Society, in which nurses came from different hospitals distributed across four major geographic regions (North, Center, South, East) of Taiwan. A total of 123 oncology nurses participated in this study. A set of questionnaires were used for collecting data. Communication skill ability for immunotherapy issues, self-efficacy for immunotherapy-related care, critical thinking ability, and background information were assessed in this survey. Independent T-test and one-way ANOVA were used to examine different levels of communication skill ability based on nurses having done oncology courses (yes vs. no) and education years (< 1 year, 1-3 years, and > 3 years), respectively. Spearman correlation was conducted to understand the relationships between communication skill ability and other variables. Among the 123 oncology nurses in the current study, the majority of them were female (98.4%), and most of them were employed at a hospital in the North (46.8%) of Taiwan. Most of them possessed a university degree (78.9%) and had at least 3 years of prior work experience (71.7%). Forty-three of the oncology nurses indicated in the survey that they had not received oncology nurses-related training. Those oncology nurses reported moderate to high levels of communication skill ability for immunotherapy issues (mean=4.24, SD=0.7, range 1-5). Nurses reported moderate levels of self-efficacy for immunotherapy-related care (mean=5.20, SD=1.98, range 0-10) and also had high levels of critical thinking ability (mean=4.76, SD=0.60, range 1-6). Oncology nurses who had received oncology training courses had significantly better communication skill ability than those who had not received oncology training. Oncology nurses who had higher work experience (1-3 years, or > 3 years) had significantly higher levels of communication skill ability for immunotherapy-related issues than those with lower work experience (<1 year). When those nurses reported better communication skill ability, they also had significantly better self-efficacy ($r=.42$, $p<.01$) and better critical thinking ability ($r=.47$, $p<.01$). Taken altogether, courses designed to improve communication skill ability for immunotherapy-related issues can make a significant impact in clinical settings. Communication skill ability for oncology nurses is the major factor associated with self-efficacy and critical thinking, especially for those with lower work experience (< 1 year).

Keywords : communication skills, critical thinking, immunotherapy, oncology nurses, self-efficacy

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