CN7 Perceptions of rural nurses extending their role to administer chemotherapy

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Background: Nurses in rural regions of South Australia are currently administering chemotherapy in centres where this was not previously the case. To prepare these nurses; a state-wide chemotherapy education and assessment programme was implemented in 2013. This research project explored the perceptions of nurses working in level-one rural centres administering low-risk chemotherapy protocols. The study explored how registered nurses who administer chemotherapy in low-risk chemotherapy services in rural SA perceive their expanded roles and whether they felt equipped with the knowledge and skills required to undertake them.

Methods: This is a qualitative study. Individual interviews were conducted with eight registered nurses working in low-risk chemotherapy centres in rural settings. The data analysis methods were based on critical social theory.

Results: Four main categories of findings are identified: 1) role extension, preparedness and self-confidence; 2) chemotherapy services in rural areas; 3) power relationships, referrals and knowledge sustainability; and 4) communication with other cancer settings and professionals. Overall, participants highly valued the service as valuable support for rural patients with cancer, but they identified areas of concern, including the rural nurses’ roles in cancer care, the need to maintain knowledge and skills and to establish their role in referral and follow-up processes.

Conclusions: Participants expressed their perceptions of their role. Then, through critical theory, their voices were revealed, expressing their needs and suggestions for changing and improving their role and the service.

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