Executive Summary

Nurses caring for patients with a cancer engage with them along a trajectory that includes diagnoses, surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, survivorship and if required specialist palliative care. The care of these patients is provided by dynamic, educated, competent and caring nurses working across all clinical directorates within St. James’s Hospital.

This report will outline the achievements and advances in nursing professionally and through research and audit. The future development and planning of patient services by nurses are strategic and varied as outlined in this report.

Background

Nursing teams caring for patients with a cancer diagnosis span all clinical directorates within the organisation: Medical, Surgical, Oncology and Haematology and the Care of the Elderly which include both inpatient and ambulatory care services. This ensures that high quality and safe patient care is provided throughout. Nurses caring for patients with cancer throughout the organisation are supported in advancing their clinical practices and decision making skills by Clinical Nurse Manager colleagues to ensure that such high standards are maintained.

The Bone Marrow Transplant Unit provides a national service for a rising number of patients requiring bone marrow transplant. Recent JACIE accreditation late in 2018 has ensured that up to date evidenced based protocols and standards are employed within the Stem Cell Transplant service.

Audit & Research

Audit and research activities are of paramount importance to the nursing team in St. James’s Hospital (SJH) and evidence of it is apparent at different levels throughout the organisation.

Audit and Research is one of the core competencies...
for Clinical Nurse Specialists and registered Advanced Nurse Practitioners throughout the organisation and priority is given to this aspect of their role. Nurses in other nursing roles are also encouraged and supported to partake in audit and research activities.

SJH has a research collaborative agreement with the Trinity Centre for Practice and Healthcare Innovation since 2012. The aim of this agreement is to enhance the research capacity of nurses working in SJH.

The Cancer Nursing Research Group within the organisation comprises of a Director of Research from the School of Nursing Trinity College Dublin (TCD), and a researcher from the Nursing Research Collaboration Group within TCD and nurses working in cancer care across SJH. The group actively encourages and supports nurses to become proficient and confident in academic writing, critiquing literature, undertaking research and publishing their findings.

Cancer nursing staff continue to represent SJH and their cancer speciality at both national and international cancer conferences thereby keeping abreast and participating in current standards of cancer care.

From an international nursing perspective, in 2018 the European wide ESMART research project was rolled out in SJH. This is a European nursing study monitoring chemotherapy toxicities and their effect on a patient’s quality of life during chemotherapy treatment. Recruitment for the study was undertaken in the Haematology and Oncology Day Centre (HODC) and Donal Hollywood Ward (a specialised cancer ward in SJH).

Achievements and Challenges

Advancing Nursing Practice:

Following the publication of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and recommendations were identified. Furthermore the strategy recognised the role that nurses working in advanced nursing posts could play in helping to realise these KPIs and recommendations. Nurses in advanced practice positions ensure that the cancer patient’s healthcare needs will be met though impeccable assessment, planning, implementing, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating of care all of which are underpinned by appropriate expert knowledge, autonomy, expertise of practice and professional and clinical leadership.

The appointment of a Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner (RANP) in Cancer Survivorship, Cardiothoracic and Palliative Care have been valuable additions to the patients experience in recent years. Historically palliative care services in the acute hospital setting have been confined to inpatient services. However, most cancers are treated without the need for admission to hospital. Confining the provision of palliative care only to those in an inpatient setting denies a significant majority of ambulatory palliative care patients receiving anti-cancer treatment access to palliative care. The introduction of the RANP in Specialist Palliative Care in February 2017 ensures a safe transition and a continuity of care between healthcare settings and healthcare professionals. The RANP in palliative care acting in an advanced nursing, patient centred capacity spans traditional boundaries to provide timely and appropriate specialist knowledge and skill sets to the ambulatory palliative care patient, their family, multidisciplinary team members, other healthcare organisations, and to healthcare professionals in the primary care setting.

In June 2018 an RANP nurse-led lung cancer surveillance and survivorship service was established. All patients who have lung resection for primary lung cancer remain under surveillance for a minimum of five years post-surgery. There are three RANP led clinics each week and patients are seen at a dedicated appointment time. Each clinic review includes a physical and psychosocial assessment, health promotion and review of surveillance radiology. The service also provides a continuum of care between the acute service, patients and their primary care providers as the RANP managing the service can be contacted between appointments if necessary via email or mobile phone.

The RANP in Cancer Survivorship was appointed in July 2018. The role of the RANP in Cancer Survivorship in St. James’s Hospital is in the early stages and will con-
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continue to develop in collaboration with the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP). The initial phase involved the establishment of RANP Nurse-led Cancer Survivorship clinics which are based in the outpatient setting. The patient groups identified as the priority to be included in the caseload and scope of practice is breast, lymphoma and testicular cancers. The overall purpose of the service is to provide safe, timely, evidenced based nurse-led care to patients at an advanced nursing level. This involves undertaking and documenting complete episodes of patient care, which includes comprehensive assessment, diagnosis, planning, treating and the discharging of patients in accordance with collaboratively agreed local policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines and/or service level agreements/memoranda of understanding. The specific purpose of the RANP in Cancer Survivorship is to empower patients to achieve their best possible health.

A new advanced nursing post in diagnostics was established in the Breast Care Service with the support of the NCCP. The successful candidate ANP was appointed in December 2018.

Education

The personal and professional development of nurses working in cancer care within the organisation is maintained as they progressively and continuously achieve competence in their area of expertise. The provision of Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) certified courses help to nurture and retain nursing staff. These accredited post graduate courses are run in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and examples are listed below:

- Fundamentals of Oncology Programme
- Fundamentals of Haematology Programme
- Palliative Care Foundation Programme
- Psych-Oncology Programme
- Foundation in Stoma Care
• Post Graduate Diploma in Cancer Care & Haematology in Trinity College Dublin

• MSc in Cancer Care & Haematology

• Weekly Journal Clubs (both Medical & Nursing facilitated)

The HOPe Directorate has developed a Foundation course in Haematology and Cancer Care which will commence in the first quarter 2019.

Nursing Grand rounds is a new initiative commencing in early 2019 with the aim of sharing quality service developments and practice initiatives across the hospital.

Key Priorities

Future Developments

Recruitment of a project nurse in Q 1 2019 to examine the current practices and management of the acutely unwell oncology, haematology, radiation oncology and palliative care patient, who come through the Emergency Department or HODC and to develop a pathway for the management of these patients is imminent.

Early 2019 will see the recruitment of a Dermatology Clinical Nurse Specialist. The principle role of this advanced nursing post is to facilitate the journey of each patient diagnosed with a malignant melanoma across the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. The introduction of a coordinated nurse led rapid access pigmented lesion clinic will address the growing figures of melanoma with access to nurse led dermoscopy and advanced wound care management.

Also, early 2019 will see the recruitment of a Thyroid Disease Clinical Nurse Specialist. This pan-hospital post and will see a standardised pathway of care for patients in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group diagnosed with thyroid cancer and requiring radioactive iodine treatment. The TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery and St. James’s Hospital are building their capacity within nursing to make a more substantial contribution to leading the cancer nursing care research agenda in Ireland.

Key to this is the establishment of a Nursing Professor in Cancer Care as a joint appointment between the two organisations. The Nursing Professor in Cancer Care will have a dual role of facilitating and leading on establishing and progressing a strong nursing research base within the organisation and being proactive in the in strategic planning and implementation of cancer nursing. It is foreseen that as part of this strategy cancer nurses will be encouraged and facilitated to undertake Masters and Doctoral programs to further strengthen the nursing research agenda within the organisation.

Conclusion

Cancer care in our hospital spans across all of our clinical directorates and involves many MDT professionals.

The nursing team consider OECI accreditation a fantastic opportunity to advance nursing in our hospital clinically and in nursing research. There are many academic opportunities through our strong established relationship with TCD.

For many cancer patients their journey includes radiation and we are proud of the strong nursing relationship with the on campus St Luke’s Hospital Radiation Oncology Centre.

St. James’s Hospital is a dynamic and exciting healthcare campus with a large complement of highly competent and skilled nursing colleagues working in cancer care. We have the largest number of nurses in the country working in advanced nursing positions such as Clinical Nurse Specialists, Registered Nurse Prescribers and Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioners.

The focus of nursing care is on quality, research, education and clinical competence. We relish the opportunity to engage in OECI accreditation which we believe will bring multiple benefits to nursing and to patients and will ensure the patient remains at the forefront of what we do in this hospital. OECI accreditation will continue the momentum towards positive change and keep this organisation where it has been for many years, as a leader of healthcare in this country.