

# Research into palliative care top priority for cancer patients

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How and when people are referred to palliative care should be prioritised according to cancer patients, a new study in the Oncology Nursing Forum has found.

In the first ever study of its kind, researchers from the University of Surrey with funding from the UK Oncology Nursing Society surveyed cancer patients and nurses to help identify priorities for future research into oncology nursing and how it should be delivered.

During the study patients identified palliative and end-of-life care as top areas for future examination with particular focus on models of end-of-life care in the community and access to specialist palliative care within oncology services. The identification of this as a matter of importance for patients suggests that improvements on how and when [palliative care](#) services are introduced is required.

Those affected by cancer also classified cognitive changes associated with cancer treatment as a priority for future research, as such changes are not only distressing for the patient but their families as well.

Unlike patients, oncology nurses placed importance on the use of eHealth and technology to manage cancer symptoms at home as an area of significance for future research. The identification of this priority area shows that nurses are responsive to service changes in the NHS and are increasingly using technology in the delivery of care.

Despite such differences, oncology nurses and patients were in agreement in a number of areas on what should be on future research agendas. Nurses and patients agreed that factors affecting the early presentation of cancer symptoms should be a key area of future research. This is in keeping with research in this area which shows that early diagnosis of cancer is vital in improving cancer survival rates and delivering effective care.

Both parties also identified the availability of psychosocial support services across the cancer pathway and the management of anxiety and uncertainty following [cancer treatment](#), as future areas of research.

Professor Emma Ream from the University of Surrey said: "People living with cancer provide a valuable contribution in informing research agendas for oncology nursing and should have an input in future priority setting.

"Our study demonstrates the importance of seeking the opinions of [cancer](#) patients, as what they consider important may not mirror what the profession considers a priority. Too often the voice of [cancer patients](#) is unheard, but if services are to improve we should listen to the very people they are affecting."

Richard Henry, President of UK Oncology Nursing Society said "Cancer nurses are at the forefront of care delivery and are acutely aware of those factors which affect and influence care.

"UKONS is delighted to have been able to facilitate this study that articulates this knowledge and understanding so succinctly whilst acknowledging and embracing the patient perspective."

**More information:** Establishing Priorities for Oncology Nursing Research: Nurse and Patient Collaboration. *Oncology Nursing Forum*.

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