



Ontario Health
Cancer Care Ontario

Systemic Cancer Treatment Administration: Initial and Continuing Competence Standards for Registered Nurses

Frequently Asked Questions for Registered Nurses

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What prompted the review and changes to the Oncology Nursing Program’s Position Statements for Nursing Practice in Cancer Care?

Regional Cancer Programs (RCPs) have expressed concerns regarding their ability to meet the standards outlined in the Position Statements for Nursing Practice in Cancer Care - particularly [Position Statements #5 & #6](#) - which relate to Registered Nurse (RN) competency training for the administration of systemic cancer treatment¹.

Furthermore, the Oncology Nursing Program Committee (ONPC), comprised of Regional Oncology Nursing Leads, felt it was important to review the Position Statements to ensure the standards aligned with the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology’s (CANO) Chemotherapy Administration Standards² and promoted the safest practice for RNs and patients receiving systemic cancer treatment.

What was in scope for this review?

Two of the Oncology Nursing Program Position Statements for Nursing Practice in Cancer Care ([Position Statements #5 & #6](#)) were reviewed and updated. Additionally, a companion document - the *Systemic Cancer Treatment Administration: Initial and Continuing Competence Standards for Registered Nurses (Standards)* - was developed specifically describing the standards required to meet the Position Statements as stated.

The *Standards* take into consideration:

- which type of nurse should administer systemic cancer treatment based on their scope of practice;
- care/activities directly related to the delivery of systemic cancer treatment defined as chemotherapy, targeted therapies, and immunotherapy;
- requirements for the attainment and maintenance of competency for RNs who administer systemic cancer treatment, regardless of setting;
- the responsibilities of the RN in the role who administers on a regular basis or less regular basis;
- the responsibilities of the hiring organization; and
- the responsibilities of the regional cancer program.

What was out of scope for this review?

The *Standards* do not address:

- other activities in systemic treatment suites such as administration of blood transfusions, hydration/electrolyte infusions, procedures; or
- funding associated with the recognized courses.

¹ Throughout this document, the term systemic cancer treatment refers to parenteral systemic cancer treatment.

² CANO/ACIO (2017). Standards and Competencies for Cancer Chemotherapy Nursing Practice. Available from: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cano-acio.ca/resource/resmgr/Resources/EN_CANO_Chemotherapy_Standar.pdf

Who participated in developing these *Standards* and updating the Position Statements?

The Systemic Cancer Therapy Nurse Competency Training Working Group supported the development of the *Standards*. The working group was comprised of 3 RNs, 8 nurse educators, 9 nurse managers, 5 clinical leaders, and 3 program directors with representation from all 14 RCPs. Some of the ONPC Regional Leads were part of this composition.

The ONPC provided expert review of the *Standards* as well as participated in the update of the Position Statements.

Both the *Standards* and Position Statements were shared with Regional Cancer Program Directors, Regional Cancer Program Vice Presidents, and Ontario Health Clinical Council for review and approval.

How were the *Standards* informed?

A jurisdictional scan was completed of national and international standards/position statements and their alignment with CANO's Chemotherapy Administration Standards.² A review of current practices within RCPs was also completed. The findings were assessed by the working group and informed the decisions and *Standards*.

Why do the *Standards* only focus on RNs?

In alignment with CANO's standards,² the College of Nurses of Ontario's Practice Guideline for *RN and RPN Practice: The Client, the Nurse and the Environment (2011)*³ and Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)'s *Oncology Nursing Practice Continuum*⁴, the RN is the appropriate nurse role to administer systemic treatment.

The working group and the ONPC agree that the RN role meets the level of complexity as determined by the^{2,5}:

- Preparation and administration requirements for systemic treatment
- Risk of immediate grade 3 or 4 toxicities
- Medical condition of the patient
- Use of investigational agents or new agents just approved for which little long-term toxicity data are available

³ College of Nurses of Ontario. (2011). RN and RPN Practice: The Client, the Nurse and the Environment Practice Guideline. <http://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41062.pdf>

⁴ Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) (2021). Oncology Nursing Practice Cancer Continuum. Available from: <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/sites/ccocancercare/files/assets/NursingPracticeContinuum.pdf>

⁵ CANO/ACIO. (2009). National Chemotherapy Administration Nursing Practice Strategy Phase I Final Report, p.24. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

How will these changes impact the initial competency and maintenance of competence course offerings?

For ONS/ONCC courses:

- The ONS/ONCC Chemotherapy Immunotherapy Certificate Course is always open for enrollment at any point in time and will continue this way.
- The ONS/ONCC Chemotherapy Immunotherapy Certificate Renewal Course is currently required Q 2years and will continue to be Q 2years.

For the de Souza Institute courses:

- The de Souza Institute Provincial Standardized Chemotherapy and Biotherapy (PSCB) course offering has been increased to 6 times/year (3 offerings with workshop and 3 without workshop/assignments only). To align with and support the implementation of the *Standards*, the de Souza Institute may make changes to how often this course is delivered.
- The de Souza Institute Chemotherapy Competency Maintenance Course (CCMC) is offered every month.
- Currently, the de Souza Institute requires the CCMC to be completed every 18 months. Upon the launch and implementation of the *Standards*, the CCMC must be completed every 24 months.

In the future, will Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) expand their list of approved theoretical courses to include other courses developed by professional educational institutions?

The working group recommended, and the ONPC agreed, that criteria should be developed to assist with assessing other courses that may be developed by professional educational institutions in the future. The ONPC will develop these criteria as part of their future work.

Will Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) be providing a standardized supplemental training program and exam for RNs that are waiting to complete the approved courses?

Appendix 1 of the *Standards* document provides an outline of the topics that are to be included in the supplemental training if a recognized standardized education course is not yet in progress. For further information, connect with your manager.

Am I able to administer systemic cancer treatment if I am waiting to enroll in one of the standardized courses for initial attainment of competency?

If you have not begun one of the standardized courses, your hiring organization will need to provide supplemental training with an exam and supervised clinical practice until a recognized course can be completed. You will be able to begin supervised clinical training and may only administer or utilize skills where you have demonstrated competency based on the Ontario Systemic Cancer Treatment Skills Competency Checklist. Until such time that you complete one of the standardized courses, you will continue to have a supervised clinical practice.

Am I able to administer systemic cancer treatment if I am in the process of completing one of the standardized courses for initial attainment of competency?

If you are in the process of completing one of the standardized courses, you will be able to begin supervised clinical training and may only administer or utilize skills where you have demonstrated the competency based on the Ontario Systemic Cancer Treatment Skills Competency Checklist. Until such time that you complete the standardized course in progress, you will continue to have a supervised clinical practice.

Is there a recommended length of time for the supervised clinical practice component for initial attainment of competency?

The length of the supervised clinical practice component will be determined collaboratively with you, your manager, and your educator based on your professional development needs, as stated in section 1.2 of the *Standards*.

How will I determine where I am at in my maintenance of competence cycle?

- You should time the cycle for maintenance course completion in 2 years' time from the last maintenance course completed and confirm this timing with your manager/educator/leader. You will receive three emails from de Souza Institute prior to the start date of the last possible CCMC course available within your renewal cycle. If your CCMC lapses, you will need to repeat the PSCB.
 - In general, if your maintenance course is in progress at the time the new Position Statements and *Standards* are launched, you should continue to complete the course and then time the next course to be completed in 2 years' time from that date.
 - If you are participating in a renewal course taking place in **July, August, or September 2021**, you are to take your course as scheduled as per the current 18-month policy. *All renewals thereafter will be on a 24-month cycle.*
 - If your CCMC renewal course is scheduled after October 1st, 2021, the start date for your course will be extended by six months. *Renewals thereafter will be on a 24-month cycle.*
 - For example, if you are to start the course on October 18, 2021, you will have a new renewal course start date of April 2022.
 - Due date extensions and additional details will be published on www.desouzainstitute.com
- If you administer systemic cancer treatment less regularly, arrangements should be made for the collaborative meeting to occur when your self-assessment tools and professional development action plan are completed annually to ensure maintenance of competence and at any other time as necessary
- You should understand your organization's expectations related to the annual self-reflection and professional development components, and the managing and monitoring of the action plan, as outlined in 2.1 of the *Standards*

How do I determine whether I am someone who administers less frequently?

RNs who administer less frequently or who have not administered for an extended period of time may include those who are casual and are scheduled sporadically; those who have had a decrease in the frequency of their administrations over the past year; or those who have been on a leave of absence. If you are unsure if you fall into this category, speak with your leader/educator/manager.

This definition is meant to encourage you to use the self-assessment tools to determine your competence as it can vary with infrequent experiences and to meet with your leader/educator/manager for professional development opportunities to ensure competence.

Can I use the same self-reflection for both systemic cancer treatment maintenance of competence and for my College of Nurses of Ontario Quality Assurance (CNO QA) requirements?

The purpose of both self-assessment tools are the same—to reflect on your experiences to foster continuous learning. The CANO self-assessment tool and the Ontario Systemic Cancer Treatment Skills Competency Self-Assessment Checklist help you reflect specifically on aspects related to systemic treatment administration. The focused action plan with goals for the CNO QA program may not always align with these tools. Therefore, each year you should carefully review the requirements presented by the CNO QA program to ensure the same action plan meets the maintenance of competence requirements.

When will the revised Position Statements and *Standards* be implemented?

The revised Position Statements and *Standards* will be launched October 1, 2021.

Who should I contact if I have more questions?

For any questions, relating to the Position Statements or *Standards*, please contact your manager and/or the Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) Oncology Nursing Program at OH-CCO_Nursing@ontariohealth.ca.

For any questions relating to the de Souza Institute's course delivery, please contact the de Souza Institute at support@desouzainstitute.com or 416-581-7887, or visit their website at www.desouzainstitute.com.