

Navigating the Complexity of Immunotherapy

The Impact of Nurse Specialists in the Rural Setting

Danielle Goss | Melanoma Nurse, Wagga

BACKGROUND

43%

of Australians diagnosed with cancer by age 85 ^{1,2}.

28%

of cancer cases occur in rural & remote areas ^{1,2}.

- Limited specialist access, fragmented care and travel burden for rural oncology patients ^{1,2}.
- Higher 5-year mortality for rural/remote vs metropolitan patients ^{1,2}.
- Immunotherapy irAEs require close, ongoing monitoring across all organ systems³.

AIM

To explore how oncology nurse specialists (NS's) could enhance rural patient access to immunotherapy and improve safety through advocacy, integration and education.

DESIGN / METHODS

Narrative literature examination identifying:

- Needs of rural oncology patients receiving immunotherapy
- Challenges of delivering immunotherapy in rural areas
- NS capabilities aligned with National Cancer Plan priorities



RESULTS

Three key themes emerged, highlighting the potential value of rural Oncology NS's:



Accessibility & Equity

- Reduce geographic and systemic barriers to care ⁴.
- Provide consistent, localised patient support ^{5,6}.
- Enable immunotherapy treatment closer to home ⁴.



Clinical Expertise & Collaboration

- Advanced assessment for early irAE recognition ^{7,8,9}.
- Integration within multidisciplinary teams ^{10,11,12}.
- Coordinated management of complex care ¹³.



Tailored Communication & Education

- Personalised education enhances confidence ⁵.
- Improved treatment adherence and safety ^{5,6}.
- Single point of contact builds trust ^{14,9}.

CONCLUSION

- Integrating NS's into rural oncology is essential for equitable delivery of advanced treatment, such as immunotherapy
- NS's have the potential to enhance immunotherapy access and improve care quality for patients
- Rural NS roles, aligns with the 2023 Australian Cancer Plan for innovative models of care
- Investment in NS training strengthens rural healthcare capacity



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