

Optimizing Canadian Nursing Policy Infrastructure to Accelerate new roles for nurses from the Integration of Genomics

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Introduction

Genomics is transforming disease prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment and care across the lifespan. Nurses globally have faced challenges in genomics workforce development and clinical integration.

Problem

The persistence of these challenges over decades highlights the need for innovative policy and implementation strategies to support nurses to use evidence to optimize current roles, evolve with new models of care, and lead health system redesign.

Aim

A three-phase multi-method study was conducted to support two Canadian nursing organizations in accelerating the integration of genomics into oncology nursing education and practice in Canada and to learn how this could be applied to other nursing specialties.

Methodology

Phase 1 – comparative policy analysis (Canada, US, UK).

Phase 2 - interviews of oncology nurses and patient representatives and an interdisciplinary policy dialogue.

Phase 3 - generate policy options and recommended actions.

Results

- Canada lacks genomics policy infrastructure.
- Nurses need education and role clarification to engage in genomics-informed practices.
- Policies should be developed collaboratively between nurses, interdisciplinary colleagues, and health system users.
- Collaboration across countries can leverage existing resources.
- A global nursing research plan can generate evidence and avoid duplication.
- A harmonized national and global strategy will enable nurses to lead implementation efforts and close the theory-practice gap.

Conclusions

Oncology nurses require policy to lead at the forefront of innovation, carve new roles intersecting with genomics, and meet growing patient care demands. These strategies can be applied to other nursing areas.

Recommendations

Nurses can make a significant contribution to genomics services. Policy infrastructure can guide education and leadership to assist nurses to participate in designing new roles and care pathways that address patients' identified needs in the precision oncology era.