

Q & As – Dedicated Cancer Nurse Co-ordinator

What does a dedicated cancer nurse co-ordinator do?

A dedicated cancer nurse specialist coordinates care and support for individual patients throughout the course of cancer treatment from first referral.

They act as a direct and single point of contact for patients and families, and the many services and health professionals a cancer patient comes across during treatment.

They ensure all care and treatment arranged for each patient is delivered as planned, and according to his or her needs – from referral to discharge.

People with cancer have diverse needs and a dedicated cancer nurse co-ordinator's role will differ with each patient but includes:

- first point of call for patients and their families
- providing patient centred care including determining each patient's areas of need
- acting as an information and education resource to patients and their families, and providing patients with supporting information on their diagnosis treatment and possible side effects
- coordinating patients' care including tracking patients as they transfer between services and maintaining communication links to ensure that a patients care is ordered according to best practice
- providing expert management and advice on common symptoms like pain, nausea and treatment,
- providing emotional support and guidance,
- helping with a self-care plan after treatment such as access to psycho social or supportive care

What are the benefits of this role?

Dedicated cancer nurse co-ordinators improve the co-ordination and quality of care for patients throughout their course of treatment.

New Zealand health professionals are very committed and good at their jobs. But overseas research has found that a cancer patient can come into contact with an average of 28 doctors and many more nurses and allied health professionals during the course of their treatment. This can cause undue confusion and distress for patients and their families – and create delays and duplication in the health service as well.

Overseas and local research has found that patients under the care of a dedicated cancer nurse co-ordinator report a high degree of satisfaction with their treatment.

How many nurses does the funding provide?

It provides for 40 dedicated cancer nurse co-ordinators.

Is this a new role in the New Zealand health service?

It is modelled on the successful work already underway by nurses such as the Clinical Nurse Specialists Lung Cancer at Canterbury DHB.