Position on Rehabilitation of People with Cancer

Cancer is a chronic disease with concurrent physical, functional, psychological, social, and spiritual sequelae. Rehabilitation services play a very important role at every stage of the disease process. Recent trends show an increase in the number of people diagnosed with cancer as well as an increased survival rate. People with cancer are living longer with cancer-related impairments and a comprehensive rehabilitation program can help them achieve maximal functional ability and adapt to their disabilities (Beck, 2003). Cancer rehabilitation contributes to the management of some of the most prevalent and distressing symptoms of cancer care, including pain, fatigue, and asthenia. Cancer rehabilitation is also an important part of cancer survivorship care planning, and can help to mitigate future complications by promoting wellness behaviors and activities as a component of a healthy lifestyle.

The Association of Rehabilitation Nurses (ARN) believes the cancer rehabilitation registered nurse’s role in the interdisciplinary team is pivotal in creating an environment conducive to quality patient care. “The goal of rehabilitation nursing is to assist the individual with disability and chronic illness in the restoration and maintenance of maximal health” (ARN, 2008, p. 13).

It is the Position of ARN that:

- Cancer rehabilitation care is part of quality cancer care, which is a right for all patients with cancer.
- Cancer rehabilitation is an option for all patients, with the ability to participate, at any stage of cancer.
- Cancer rehabilitation incorporates the individual with cancer and the family as fully informed partners and decision makers.
- Cancer rehabilitation includes timely access to and reimbursement for a coordinated, comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach.
- Cancer rehabilitation is best coordinated and delivered by registered nurses who have been educated and certified in oncology or rehabilitation specialties.
- Research and education in rehabilitation are funded to find ways to advance care for people with cancer.
- Cancer rehabilitation programs are collaborative and interdisciplinary, whether based in acute, subacute, or home care, and are focused on quality of life.

References


Additional Resources

ARN Board of Directors approved October 1999; revised March 2003, revised October 2006, revised March 2010, revised October 2012.