

Professional Competence in Oncology: Challenges for Education

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Introduction

The oncology care is one of the most distinguished scenarios, considering cancer diagnosis plurality, treatment types, physical symptoms (from the treatment or the disease), and comorbidities, variety of socio-demographic and cultural profiles of patients and family, and also physical, material and technological resources. In this sense, the health professional that works in oncology has a daily challenges to ensure the quality of care and should be updated in these different aspects [1].

Training programs in oncology are the responsibility of professional educational and health institutions specialized. They are responsible to create practical skills-based professional education programs that result in rapid enhancement to the quality of care with concerns in deeply humanistic, honest, and responsible in the use of the limited resources reality [2,3]. As any other health specialization it is a big challenge to train qualified professionals and keep them in their professional careers, prompting questions as: What would be the skills required for professionals to work in oncology? How to develop and to improve these skills?

Certainly the patient care process in oncology is complex, requiring professional clinical judgment and critical thinking. The refinement of cognitive skills for making complex and judicious decision can be obtained with the use of active teaching methods, such as Concept Mapping (CM), a graphical tool that aims to organize and represent the knowledge (ihmc.us) [4]. The CM is structured based on fundamental concepts and their relationships. Usually, the concepts are highlighted in text boxes. The relationship between two concepts is represented by a line or an arrow, containing a "connecting word" or a "connecting phrase". Applied to labor activity, the construction of CM allows the professional to a self-assessment of how the concepts are organized from their previous cognitive structure and which are the gaps of knowledge [5]. The weaknesses and potentialities to solve problems can be noticed in this process. CM strategy is widely used in different educational contexts and in all areas of knowledge. There is a software so called CMapTools (cmap.ihmc.us) developed at the Florida Institute for Human & Machine Cognition (IHMC) that helps the CM construction. It also enables browsing and sharing knowledge by various professionals on issues of collective interests.

Our experience applying CM to teach the oncology areas for nurses in different levels of training – undergraduate, postgraduate: lato sensu and stricto sensu – to teach the oncology areas for nurses in different levels [6]. The issues can be developed from the basic to the most complex concepts, according to the students' educational level. Clinical oncology cases may also be solved using MC strategy.

The steps for decision making can be elucidated in the boxes, linked by appropriated words or phrases, establishing relationships, overlaps, and complexity of the process [7]. An example of CM with basic concepts on chemotherapy subject is shown in Figure 1.

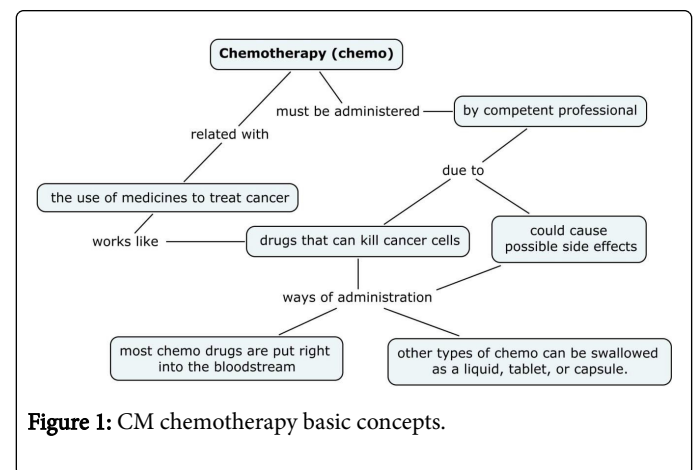


Figure 1: CM chemotherapy basic concepts.

Conclusion

In view of the wide applicability of the CM and the positive and certified experience, we expected that this brief explanation may raise the reader's motivation to know more about this important teaching skills, arousing curiosity and interest in using this tool, as an updated an enthusiastic teaching strategy, that favor the learning process and improvement knowledge in Oncology. We really endorse the CM for this purpose.

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