

April 21, 2020

An Urgent Message from the Japanese Society of Cancer Nursing (JSCN): Assurance of the Quality of Cancer/Nursing Care and the Protection of People's Lives and Dignity

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a global disaster. People around the world are now fighting the COVID-19 threat. Cancer patients who are receiving intensive treatment may be at an increased risk for COVID-19. If infected, they may require systemic management or even a temporary discontinuance in cancer treatment. In addition, the collapse of medical services may occur in hospitals that are too stretched to respond to COVID-19. With the attention needed for combatting COVID-19, it may become difficult to provide complete cancer care. In fact, patients have reported not being able to undergo tests to confirm the definitive diagnosis of cancer or scheduled surgery. At present, business as usual is difficult for many hospitals. Nurses involved in cancer care recognize that efforts must be made to provide necessary care based on medical evidence and compassion for all cancer patients.

The Japanese Society of Cancer Nursing (JSCN) aims to ensure “the quality of cancer/nursing care and protect people’s lives and dignity.” During the COVID-19 crisis, the JSCN is exploring effective measures for combatting infectious diseases, providing cancer care, and adhering to nursing norms based on compassion for humanity and medical evidence. To this end, the JSCN issues the following urgent message to our members, nurses, healthcare professionals, medical/health facilities, local and central governments, and society regarding the need for collaboration and cooperation.

1. It is our sincere hope that cancer patients at high risk for infections continue cancer treatment while following measures to prevent COVID-19 infection (e.g., washing hands, adhering to recommended physical distancing guidelines, staying home, and obtaining adequate nutrition and sleep). Accordingly, the JSCN collaborates and cooperates with relevant academic societies and organizations to ensure that patients receive safe and optimal medical care based on infection prevention measures through the comprehensive process of prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up, as well as the dissemination of information and recommendations to society (<https://jscn.or.jp/index.html>).
2. The threat of infection may cause considerable stress for cancer patients and their families and fears regarding delays in cancer treatment, disease progression, and death. In cooperation with relevant academic societies and organizations, the JSCN will consider counseling services and provide practical support to cancer patients and their families.

3. Frontline healthcare providers continue to provide optimal medical and nursing care while suffering from threats of infection, significant stress, and excessive physical and emotional burdens. Improvements in the working environment are urgently needed, along with a logistic support system and mental/physical support system so that healthcare professionals will not become infected or physically and mentally overwhelmed by their sense of mission. The JSCN requests that central and local governments strengthen their logistic and mental support systems in response to COVID-19 measures while acknowledging our role in collaborating and cooperating with relevant academic societies and organizations.
4. The pathology of COVID-19 is unknown, and there is not enough evidence for comprehensive diagnoses, treatment, or nursing care. It is imperative that academic organizations thoroughly analyze and study COVID-19 from all aspects and develop measures to prevent an infection explosion. The JSCN will continue collecting and tracking data from a specialized perspective and conduct research regarding cancer nursing for patients' treatment and activities of daily living.

A global crisis cannot be beaten alone. The JSCN would like to send the message that “we are not alone” as we work together to overcome this crisis.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

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President of the Japanese Society of Cancer Nursing