

Abstract

Care Coordination for Patients With Cancer: The Role of the Oncology Nurse Navigator - A Narrative Review

Simona Maria Michela Leonardo^{1,2}, Monica Liberatori², Ilenia Cipolla^{1,2}, Maria Luisa Gregori^{1,2}

¹ Medical Oncology Unit, Fondazione Policlinico Universitario Agostino Gemelli IRCCS, Rome, Italy

² Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, Fondazione Policlinico Universitario Agostino Gemelli IRCCS, Rome, Italy

(Corresponding Author: simonamariamichela.leonardo@policlinicogemelli.it)

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Introduction. Cancer care pathways are complex and frequently fragmented, involving multiple healthcare professionals and care settings throughout diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up. Combined with the emotional and social burden of cancer, this complexity may lead to patient disorientation, discontinuity of care, and poor treatment adherence. The Oncology Nurse Navigator (ONN) has clinical, educational, and coordination competencies that may facilitate care integration and support patients throughout the disease trajectory. This review aimed to analyze the role of the ONN in reducing care fragmentation, improving patient satisfaction, and enhancing treatment adherence.

Methods. A narrative literature review was conducted in October 2025 using the PubMed and Scopus databases. No filters or restrictions were applied. Articles were screened by title, abstract, and full text according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Results. A total of 739 records were identified, comprising 441 records from PubMed and 298 from Scopus. Following the selection process, nine studies were included in the review. Most studies reported that nurse navigator-led interventions were associated with more timely care, improved coordination across healthcare services, and greater patient satisfaction.

Discussion. The Oncology Nurse Navigator may represent a strategic component of integrated, patient-centered cancer care models. Further studies are needed to define the competencies and areas of intervention associated with this role, identify measurable outcomes, assess its effects on treatment adherence, and evaluate its implementation within the Italian National Health Service.

Keywords: Cancer Patients, Oncology Nurse Navigator, Continuity of Patient Care, Patient Satisfaction, Integrated Care

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