PAPUA NEW GUINEA ONCOLOGY NURSES' ASSOCIATION

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2025 NCODA INTERNATIONAL FALL SUMMIT
October 15-17, 2025 | Orlando, FL

NCODA

Empowering Oncology Nurses in Papua New Guinea: A Grassroots Initiative by Papua New Guinea Oncology Nurses' Association (PaNGONA)

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Learning Objectives

- Explain the development of a nurse-led oncology education model in Papua New Guinea.
- Analyze the outcomes and challenges of implementing grassroots oncology nursing training in a low-resource setting.
- Evaluate the influence of international partnerships and cultural adaptation on program success.

Introduction/Background

The incidence of cancer in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has escalated significantly, with a reported increase of 15% over the past five years[1] . Despite this growing burden, oncology nursing remains unrecognized as a clinical specialty. Nurses are often tasked with providing cancer care despite the absence of formal oncology training or institutional support, relying instead on ad hoc, experiential learning. This systemic issue highlights a critical gap in the healthcare system, leaving frontline healthcare providers inadequately prepared to manage complex cancer cases and support patients effectively[2]

Purpose/Objectives

The Papua New Guinea Oncology Nurses Association (PaNGONA) was founded in 2023 by frontline nurses at Port Moresby General Hospital to address this critical gap in clinical education and workforce support. Formally incorporated in 2024, PaNGONA aims to unify, empower, and build oncology nursing capacity nationwide through grassroots education and international collaboration[3]. The objectives for this initiative are to:

- Explain the development of a nurse-led oncology education model in Papua New Guinea, detailing its curriculum and delivery methods.
- Analyze the outcomes and challenges of implementing grassroots oncology nursing training in a low-resource setting, considering resource constraints and logistical hurdles.
- Evaluate the influence of international partnerships and cultural adaptation on program success, assessing their role in enhancing educational quality and sustainability.

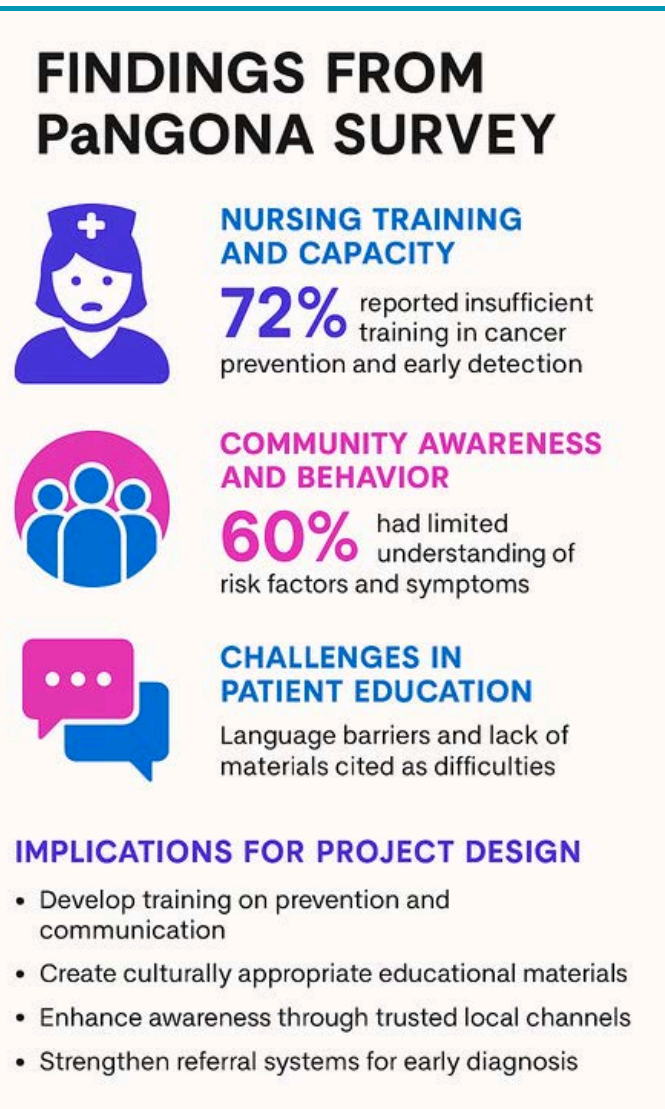
Methods

The initiative employed a nurse-led, volunteer-driven approach, including[4]:

- Monthly virtual teaching sessions on oncology and palliative care via Zoom since mid-2023.
- In-person workshops in the Southern and Momase regions in collaboration with the International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP) Oceania.
- Development of culturally adapted materials, including translated visuals, clinical case scenarios, and simulation exercises.
- Creation of governance structures and specialized committees (Education, Training, Research, Communications).
- Strategic partnerships with the International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care (ISNCC), Cancer Nurses Society of Australia (CNSA), and SIOP Oceania[5].

Results

- Over 100 nurses across PNG provinces engaged in virtual and in-person programs[4].
- Three (3) in-person workshops led by SIOP Oceania between 2023– 2025.
- Pre/post session evaluations showed a 40–50% improvement in reported clinical confidence[6].
- Oncology nursing is now included in workforce planning by two Provincial Health Authorities.
- PNG nurses are actively participating in regional and global oncology nursing forums[5].



Conclusion/Implications

This case illustrates how frontline nurse leadership, when supported by international collaboration and cultural sensitivity, can reshape cancer care delivery in underserved regions. The education initiative, originally begun by Dr. Pauline Rose (Australia) in 2021 as weekly zoom tutorials, now continues as part of the education pillar of PaNGONA since 2023. This demonstrates that nurse-led teaching, adapted to address the local and locally can effectively build clinical capacity and foster professional identity within resource-limited settings[7]. PaNGONA's success highlights the crucial importance of cultural relevance, volunteerism, and sustained partnerships in achieving significant progress in global health.

Ongoing challenges for PaNGONA include addressing digital inequity, securing consistent funding, and overcoming the absence of formal oncology nursing credentials in PNG[4]. These systemic barriers necessitate a multifaceted approach to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

Next steps include advocating for national policy integration, curriculum development, and formal recognition of oncology nursing as a specialty practice in PNG[5].

These efforts will be crucial for establishing a standardized framework for oncology nursing education and practice, ultimately leading to improved cancer care outcomes nationwide.

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