Promoting Cancer Prevention

Problem

Cancer is a leading disease that consumes a considerable amount of healthcare resources in its diagnosis and treatment. Cancer is also responsible for a large number of deaths and adversely impacts families because of its emotional and financial burden.

There are several very well-known risk factors associated with cancer. Nurses can provide an invaluable service by assessing and counseling patients who are at risk, and by providing advice and information on the methods by which patients can reduce their risk of developing cancer.

Consequence

Helping individuals change their lifestyle and activities will reduce the risk of getting cancers and its associated adverse health effects and costs.

Solution

Here are some considerations associated with reducing the risks of cancer.

- Smoking is an important contributor to a number of cancers including lung, colon, and breast cancer; it is a major contributor to cardiovascular diseases as well.

- Nurses are in a position to counsel patients against starting smoking, especially in young adolescent patients who are unable to see the relationships between early smoking and later consequences.

- If patients have begun smoking, the nurse can provide guidance into how important it is to discontinue tobacco use, and should provide resources for smoking cessation programs and treatments.

- Alcohol use is a contributor to cancers of the aero-digestive tract, breast, and pancreas.

- When combined with smoking, alcohol acts synergistically in the development of cancer.

- The nurse should assess the use of alcohol, counsel against it, and if necessary, provide guidance and support to assist in reducing or eradicating its use.
• Diets high in saturated fats predispose patients to the development of carcinoma of the colon.

• A diet that is moderate in its fat intake and also includes the use of appropriate fiber can be beneficial for oncologic and cardiovascular health.

• The nurse has a role in identifying the establishment of risk for cancer related occupational and environmental exposures; there are a number of risk factors from chemical, infectious and physical agents that predispose patients to cancer.

• An understanding of the risk factors, family history and personal habits allows the nurse to understand the patient’s cancer risk profile and counsel them on ways in which they can reduce their risk of getting cancer.

References

Avoiding Common Nursing Errors, Lisa Marcucci, MD, Editor, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2010