



Evidence-Based Practice Resources for Subject Matter Experts

Welcome to the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Subject Matter Expert (SME) role. We are excited to have you share your expertise with oncology nurses across the globe as we work to advance our mission of elevating nursing practice in the delivery of quality care.

This resource will provide you with an overview of the skills necessary to be successful in this role, along with other opportunities that may become available to you through your practice setting.

Pre-Work

As evidence-based practice (EBP) is inherent to all we do at ONS, it is important for oncology nurses to understand foundational principles that inform and guide care delivery to improve patient outcomes.

First, you should complete the [Introduction to Evidence Based Practice](#) course. The course will help with PICO question development, a necessary first step for building a quality search strategy. The course also provides 1.25 nursing continuing professional development (NCPD) hours that you can use toward individual learning needs assessment (ILNA) points for oncology certification and renewal.

How to Find Quality References: Literature Review

ONS publications provide access to an array of peer-reviewed resources that you will find helpful as you complete your assigned project. Access to Oncology Nursing Forum (ONF) and Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON) is free to ONS members through the ONS website. View-only access to textbooks can be provided on an as-needed basis while you are working on your assigned project.

For SMEs who are not currently ONS members, reach out to your ONS liaison to request articles from CJON and the ONF.

As oncology care is multidisciplinary and interprofessional, it is necessary to search for resources outside of ONS. Please look for resources that have been published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals and are within **five years** of publication, except for seminal works.

A review of the literature is key in finding quality references. If you have access to a medical library through your place of employment, the librarian can help you perform a literature search and obtain articles. If you need assistance with a search and do not have access to a medical librarian, contact your ONS liaison.

Several databases containing much of the knowledge base in healthcare are available, such as the following:

- [Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#) provides access to citations, but a paid subscription is needed to view some articles.
- [CINAHL](#) (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) is a subscription-based index of journal articles in English and select other languages.
- [PubMed](#) is a free searchable database; however, full text articles may still require a subscription to read if they are not open access, or there may be an option to purchase individual articles from the publisher.

The ONS [Evidence-Based Practice Learning Library](#) has additional resources. For a refresher on how to perform a literature review and types of studies, review this short video:

- [Searching and Study Types](#)

Level of Evidence

Level of evidence scales ranks evidence by the research methodology that would answer the clinical question with the least amount of error and provide the most reliable findings. The purpose of this additional information is to provide the learner with a guide to prioritize evidence. The higher a methodology ranks; the more confidence clinicians can have that the intervention will produce the same outcomes in similar patients. It is important to note that level I evidence is not always the most appropriate or best approach for the proposed clinical question, nor is it to say that level IV evidence should be ignored; each are important components of EBP (Finehout-Overholt & Stevens, 2019).

Ask your ONS liaison if your project requires level of evidence documentation. If so, as you prepare your reference list according to APA format, the level of evidence for each article is listed last. For example:

Burbage, D., Duffy, N., Johnson, E., & Schneider, S. (2019). Implementing a cancer survivorship program for individuals living with recurrent breast cancer. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 24(1), 89–93. [Level VI]

Waseem, H., Ginex, P., Sivakumaran, K., DeGennaro, G., Lagler-Clark, S., LeFebvre, K., Palmer, N., Pasumarthi, T., Rieger, P., Thoele, K., & Morgan, R. (2022). Interventions to support adherence to oral anticancer medications: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 49(4), 1–13. [Level I]

Level of evidence categories:

Level I: Evidence from a systematic review or meta-analysis of all relevant randomized controlled trials (RCTs).

Level II: Evidence obtained from a well-designed single RCT.

Level III: Evidence obtained from quasi-experimental studies/nonrandomized controlled trials.

Level IV: Evidence from case-control and cohort studies.

Level V: Evidence from systematic reviews of descriptive and qualitative studies.

Level VI: Evidence from a single descriptive or qualitative study and quality improvement projects.

Level VII: Evidence from expert opinion.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if the resource is peer reviewed (scholarly) ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ When using CINAHL, the “peer review” filter can be selected prior to search.➤ PubMed only indexes peer-reviewed journals. However, peer-reviewed journals may publish letters to the editor, and op eds. This would be clearly identified at the top of the resource and would not be a source for appraisal. If still unsure about a resource, contact your ONS liaison.
What are general appraisal questions to ask when reviewing evidence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Is this evidence current (within five years of publication) or a seminal work?➤ What was the purpose and design of the study?➤ Was the study method clearly described?➤ What population was studied and what was the sample size?➤ What was the setting?➤ Were the interventions, measurements, and outcomes clearly described?➤ Was participant attrition clearly accounted for? Was attrition rate < 20%?
How do I know if the resource is worth including in the body of evidence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Do the participants match my population of interest?➤ Were authors clear in methodology and were outcomes reported of clinical significance?➤ Was the resource presented without conflict of interest or bias?➤ Is this resource important to include in the body of evidence for making clinical practice decisions?

Evidence Synthesis

Evidence synthesis is a critical step in Evidence Based Practice, yet it is not required for all Subject Matter Expert roles at ONS. If your role requires evidence synthesis you will have an ONS liaison for support. Synthesis is completed once the evidence has been appraised and deemed suitable for inclusion in the final body of work. Strength, quality, intervention, and outcome measurement are considered. Conclusions are drawn based on similarities of findings across studies and recommendations may be made for application to the population or setting of interest.

Examples of evidence synthesis are the ONS Symptom Interventions, ONS Guidelines™, and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines.

How to Paraphrase and Not Plagiarize

Copying another's work word for word, quoting information without properly citing the original author, or even paraphrasing without giving credit to the original author are considered forms of plagiarism. When working on a project for ONS and using ONS source materials (books or journal articles), you must paraphrase in your own words and cite the original author(s).

To maintain the integrity and quality of ONS-published content, ONS uses plagiarism checking software on all our products in development prior to publishing.

To effectively paraphrase, read the information to ensure that you understand it, then restate the ideas in your own words. Next, recheck the information to ensure that the correct meaning has been conveyed, and finally, accurately cite the author(s) using APA format.

Referencing Content Within ONS Products

ONS uses the American Psychological Association (APA) style for references and citations. Please refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.) for more detailed information.

You may also use a citation manager to document your reference list. [EndNote](#) offers a free basic version to document your references in APA format.

When creating content as a SME, document line-item references in your work.

As part of your SME agreement with ONS, submit your completed reference list in APA format and a copy of your literature search strategies to your ONS liaison.

Copyright Information

You should never assume that a work does not have a copyright notice and is public domain simply because it is on the internet. The user is responsible for determining whether a work is in the public domain.

The content that you help create for ONS will be copyrighted and owned by ONS as outlined in your signed agreement.

References

Fineout-Overholt, E. & Stevens, K.R. (2019). Critically appraising knowledge for clinical decision making.

In B.M. Melnyk & E. Fineout-Overholt (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice in nursing and healthcare: A guide to best practice*. (4th ed., pp. 109–123). Wolters Kluwer.

ISU Libraries. (2015, May 26). *Evidence-Based Practice, Step 2 (part I): Searching* [Video]. YouTube.

https://youtu.be/799zn5gv_GM

Oncology Nursing Society. (n.d.). Evidence-based practice learning library. <https://www.ons.org/learning-libraries/evidence-based-practice>

