New learning units focus on haematological cancers

What are myeloproliferative neoplasms?

MPNs occur when the body makes too many white or red blood cells or platelets. This overproduction of blood cells in the bone marrow can create problems for blood flow and lead to a range of symptoms; they range in severity from mild to aggressive. While the conditions can be serious or life-threatening, with many remaining stable for years, providing they are diagnosed early and managed appropriately. Specialist nurses are increasingly involved in managing patients with MPNs. The long-term nature of MPNs means non-specialist nurses are increasingly likely to encounter these patients in other contexts and may therefore need an insight into their condition and treatment.

Nursing Times Learning has developed two new learning units on MPNs, which will be useful for nurses working in this specialty or interested in doing so, and for those who care for patients with these conditions when they present in non-specialist services.

The units have been developed by clinical nurse specialists and double-blind peer reviewed. Their development was fully funded by Novartis, but editorial control was retained by the authors and Nursing Times.

Chronic myeloid leukaemia

One of the learning units focuses on chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML), one of the most common types of leukaemia (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2012a). It is characterised by a proliferation of abnormal white blood cells that are not fully developed, poorly functioning and eventually suppress the production of normal white blood cells. Approximately 560 people are diagnosed with CML in the UK each year, slightly more men than women develop the condition, and the average age at diagnosis is 60 years (NICE, 2012c).

The learning unit covers:

- The pathophysiology and diagnosis of CML;
- The treatment options available;
- How patient response to treatment is measured;
- How patient treatment goals are set and how to respond if they are not achieved;
- The principle of molecular response to treatment;
- The holistic considerations necessary for long-term management of CML.

Myeloproliferative neoplasms

The second unit covers three other MPNs - polycythaemia vera, essential thrombocythaemia and myelofibrosis. Although the conditions can occur at any age, most patients are diagnosed after the age of 60 (Verstovsek, 2016). The unit covers:

- The pathophysiology of MPNs;
- Symptoms associated with MPNs;
- How MPNs are diagnosed;
- How patient symptoms are monitored;
- The treatment options available to patients with MPNs;
- The holistic considerations necessary for long-term management of MPNs.

To access the learning units go to nursingtimes.net/learning, sign in and click Learning units to enter the Nursing Times Learning system. NT