

# Answering the Call to Action: How Nurses Have Become Progressively More Involved in Immunotherapy IME (2018 to Present)

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## Background

In 2018, the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) held an immunotherapy summit to identify and prioritize the needs of oncology nurses as they relate to patients receiving immunotherapy for cancer.

Proceedings from the summit concluded that all oncology nurses must continue in the development of their skillset, knowledge, and competence related to immunotherapy.<sup>1</sup>

However, whether that call to action would be heeded remained to be seen, given that most immunotherapy focused independent medical education (IME) in the oncology space is not geared toward oncology nurses.

## Purpose

RMEI produces accredited IME in a variety of therapeutic areas, including oncology. In the analysis of learner data in our oncology programs, we observed changes in the representation of nurses in programs focused on immunotherapy.

In this study, we present the observed changes in the participation of nurses and identify needs and gaps in nursing education in immuno-oncology.

## Methods

### Identifying Educational Initiatives



RMEI educational initiatives launched between 2018 - 2022 addressing oncology immunotherapy-focused topics were identified. These initiatives include both live and online programs and curricula in a variety of sub-therapeutic areas.

### Identifying Nurses



Professional participation was reviewed for each activity to determine the proportion of nurses present. Profession was designated via self-report either during registration or in the pre-test of the program.

### Identifying Needs and Gaps



Additionally, a survey was administered to help quantify the educational needs of nurses who administer oncology patient services and identify gaps in care that can be addressed by future educational interventions.

## Discussion

We have observed a steady rise in the number of nurses participating in immunotherapy-focused educational initiatives since 2018.

This suggests nurses are trying to keep up with the continuous developments in immunotherapy. Specifically, that nurses are participating in and drawing practical knowledge from programs whether they target a nursing audience or not.

Survey results suggest ongoing challenges in nursing staff knowledge in immuno-oncology with high levels of self-awareness regarding these gaps. Opportunities for future studies to investigate the day-to-day challenges of oncology nurses as they relate to immunotherapy remain. Based on survey results, it is uncertain if the ONS Immunotherapy Wallet Card is underutilized, but it is clear that there is a demonstrated need for it. This population may benefit from increased awareness of the wallet card.

This study is limited by its observational nature, the disproportionate number of activities produced in each of the sub-therapeutic areas, and the variability in the participant reach of the platforms hosting the educational activities. Future research should explore how proficiency has evolved over time for this population.

References: 1. Galioto M, et al. *Clin J Oncol Nurs*. 2019;23(3):E60-E65.

## Results

### Educational Initiatives



22

Number of immunotherapy-focused initiatives in our database launched between 2018 - 2022



N=4,579

Number of nurses (NPs and RNs) the initiatives cumulatively reached

### Progressive Increase

Though sample sizes varied, a progressive increase in the number of nurses participating in immunotherapy-focused oncology programs increased year over year (Figure 1).

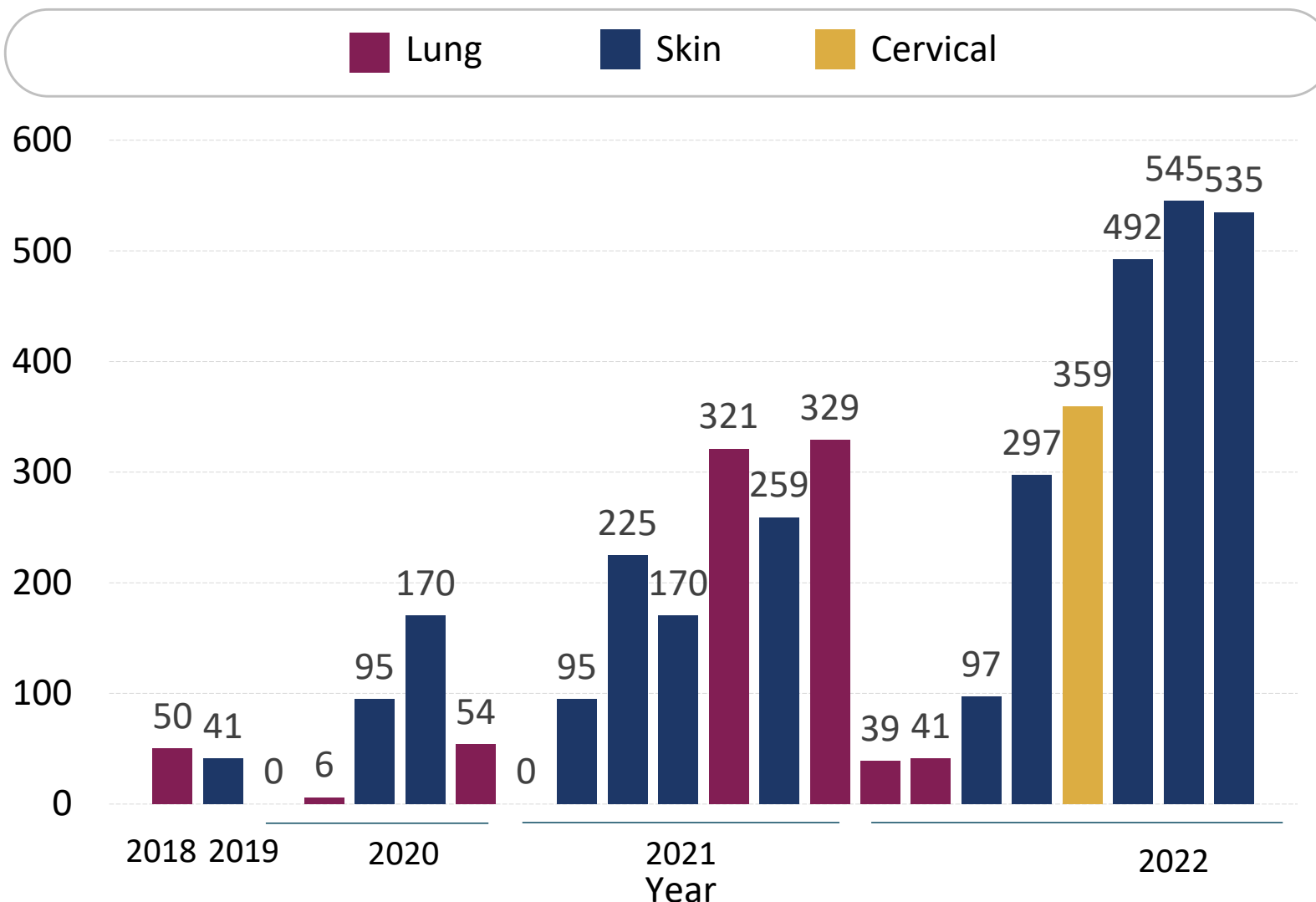
### Pronounced Trend in Skin Cancer

Evaluating engagement by sub-therapeutic area revealed that the most consistent progressive increase occurred in skin cancer programs.

### Educational Proficiency

Analysis of changes in proficiency remains underway for this population, in the context of year over year change.

Figure 1. RMEI Medical Education has observed an increase in the number of nurses participating in accredited continuing education on immunotherapy across tumor types, but particularly in non-melanoma skin cancer (2018 – 2022)



### Nursing Survey

When nurses (N=152) were asked if they have difficulty distinguishing between chemotherapy and immunotherapy...

72%  
Reported personally having difficulty

85%  
Reported colleagues having difficulty

94%  
Reported patients having difficulty

When nurses were asked about immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICIs)...

Only 46%  
Could identify an ICI from a medication list

Only 36%  
Could identify irAEs as side effects associated with ICIs

95%  
of surveyed nurses reported a patient wallet card identifying treatment type would be helpful.