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Radiation Oncology Nursing: Aligning Workload with Tumour Stream Complexity

*An evidence-based approach to workforce planning and
capability development*

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Group Manager: Development & Implementation

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Australia

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Disclosures

There is no disclosure for this presentation



Content

- the problem we were trying to solve,
- the gap we identified,
- our approach,
- what the project showed us,
- and why this work matters for the future of radiation oncology nursing.

The problem we are solving

Radiation oncology nursing work is complex

- Nursing workload often described as “one size fits all”
- Tumour stream complexity varies significantly
- Staffing and education models rarely reflect this
- Result: mismatch between **nursing hours, capability, and clinical demand**



The gap in evidence

What was missing globally?

No objective data linking:

- Nursing hours
- Clinical activity
- Tumour stream complexity

Workforce decisions often based on:

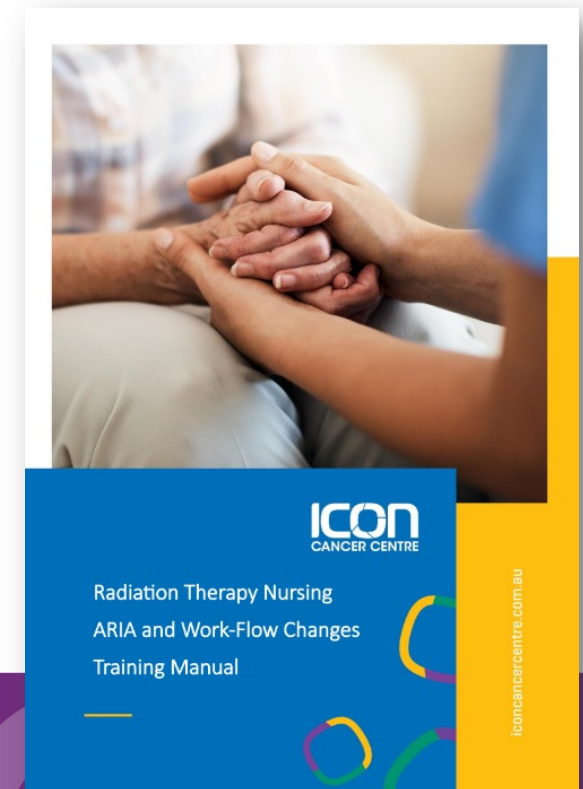
- Treatment numbers alone
- Historical staffing models



Our approach

Standardisation of nursing work across departments

- Standardised nursing appointments (eMR: ARIA)
- Model of care alignment across tumour streams
- Nursing documentation standardised



What we produced

What this work delivered

A repeatable nursing activity framework

Objective linkage between:

- Tumour stream complexity
- Nursing workload
- Required nursing hours

A **predictive workforce model**, not a retrospective one



Key finding #1

Nursing workload is not equal across tumour streams

High-complexity tumour streams consistently require:

- More direct patient contact time
- Greater coordination and clinical judgement
- Higher cognitive and emotional load

Treatment	Breast 15 Fractions	Cervix 25 Fractions
Nursing Activities	✓ Additional Nursing Review ✓ Baseline Nursing Assessment ✓ Final Nursing Review ✓ Follow-up Phone Call ✓ New Start Education ✓ Patient Related Administration ✓ Simple Dressing ✓ SOZO Reading ✓ Weekly Nursing Review	✓ Additional Nursing Review ✓ Baseline Nursing Assessment ✓ Cannulation ✓ Concurrent Chemotherapy ✓ Coordinate Chemotherapy ✓ Coordinate Prescription ✓ Coordination Bed Booking ✓ Final Nursing Review ✓ Inpatient Care ✓ Medication Administration ✓ New Start Education ✓ Patient Education ✓ Patient Manual Handling Assistance ✓ Patient Related Administration ✓ Weekly Nursing Review ✓ Weekly Weigh Patient
Median Nursing Appointments	7	11
Median Nursing Minutes	110	215

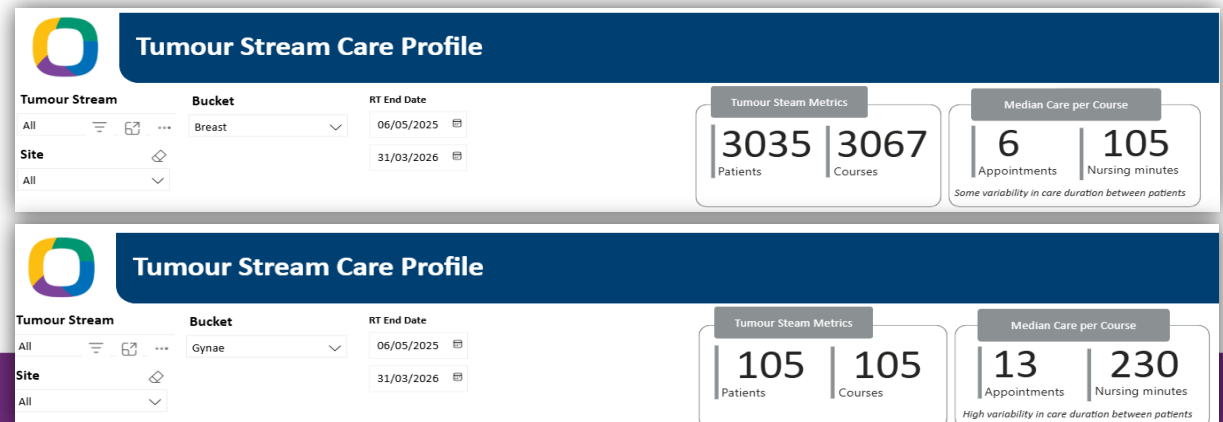
Key finding #2

Clear relationship between tumour complexity and nursing hours

Nursing hours increase **predictably and proportionally** with tumour stream complexity

This relationship is:

- Consistent
- Measurable
- Scalable



Radiation oncology nursing beyond Icon

Radiation oncology nursing is increasingly recognised internationally as a specialised practice area

- International radiation oncology nursing standards now exist
- Radiation oncology nurses recognised as advanced oncology specialists
- Increasing international focus on complexity-adjusted workforce planning
- Growing expectation for measurable nursing contribution to care delivery

Oncology Acuity and Workforce Models

Acuity-based workforce models are becoming increasingly important in oncology

- Oncology services increasingly using acuity tools to:
 - forecast workload, allocate staffing prioritise patient support needs and improve safety and efficiency
- Existing oncology acuity tools focus on:
 - symptom burden, distress, psychosocial barriers and coordination complexity
- Radiation oncology-specific nursing acuity tools remain limited internationally
- Opportunity exists for radiation oncology nursing to lead this space

What this enables: workforce planning

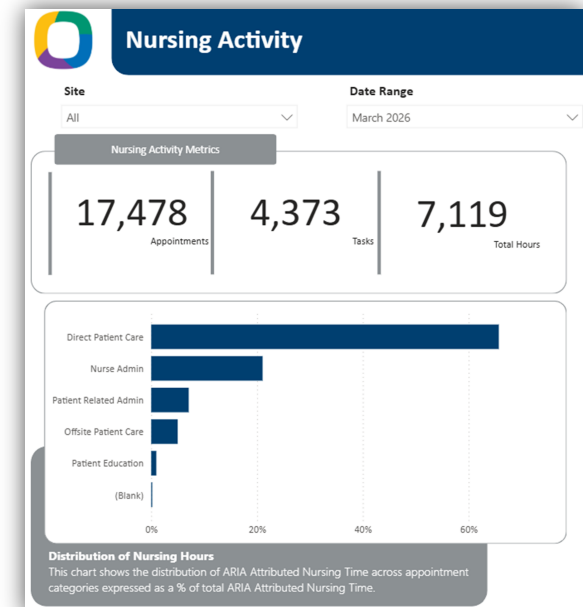
From estimation to forecasting

Evidence-based nursing hours forecasting

Ability to:

- Justify staffing models
- Plan growth safely
- Compare services meaningfully

Supports business cases with **nursing-specific data**



What this enables: education & capability

Right nurse, right tumour stream, right time

Enables:

- Targeted education by tumour stream complexity
- Structured skill acquisition pathways
- Safer onboarding and transition

Supports:

- Advanced practice development
- Retention through role clarity



Why this matters

Why this is timely and critical

- Increasing treatment complexity
- Workforce shortages
- Demand for efficiency without compromising safety
- Growing expectation of data-driven decisions



Scalability and transferability

Beyond a single service

Model is:

- Scalable across departments
- Adaptable to different service sizes
- Transferable nationally and internationally

Foundation for:

- Benchmarking
- Future research
- Policy and standards development



Closing

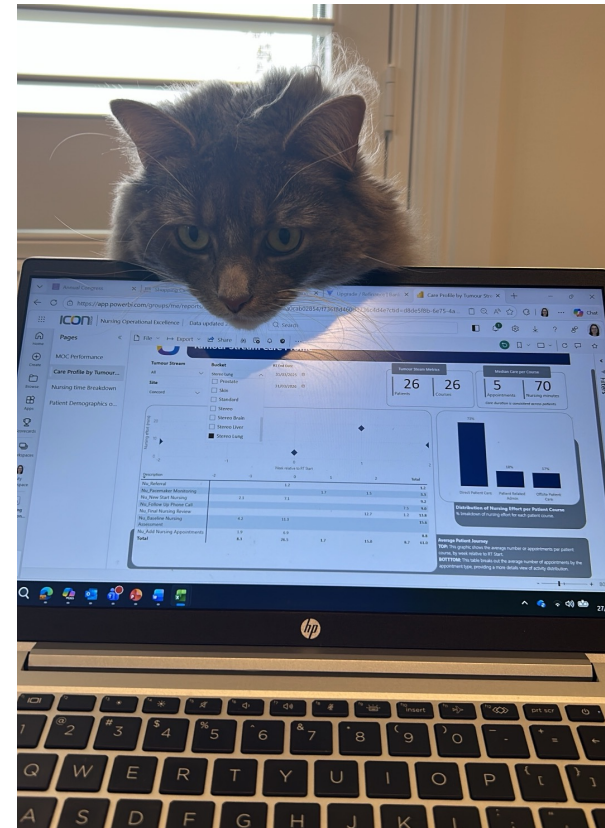
What we now have

- *Complexity drives workload, not treatment numbers alone.*
- *Nursing hours can be forecast, not guessed.*
- *Education is most effective when aligned to tumour stream complexity.*
- *This model enables safe, scalable radiation oncology nursing services.*



Thank you!

Multiple on-screen guest appearances were made by Candy.



References

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