



Co-design and evaluation of an education module enabling cancer nurses to use the Nursing equity Assessment Tool (NEAT)

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The NEAT – CARE team

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The NEAT-CARE study

A two-phase mixed methods study to:

- design practical resources that support implementation and use of the NEAT as a component of usual nursing care
- assess clinical utility (appropriateness, acceptability and practicability) of the NEAT and **resources developed** in regional cancer settings

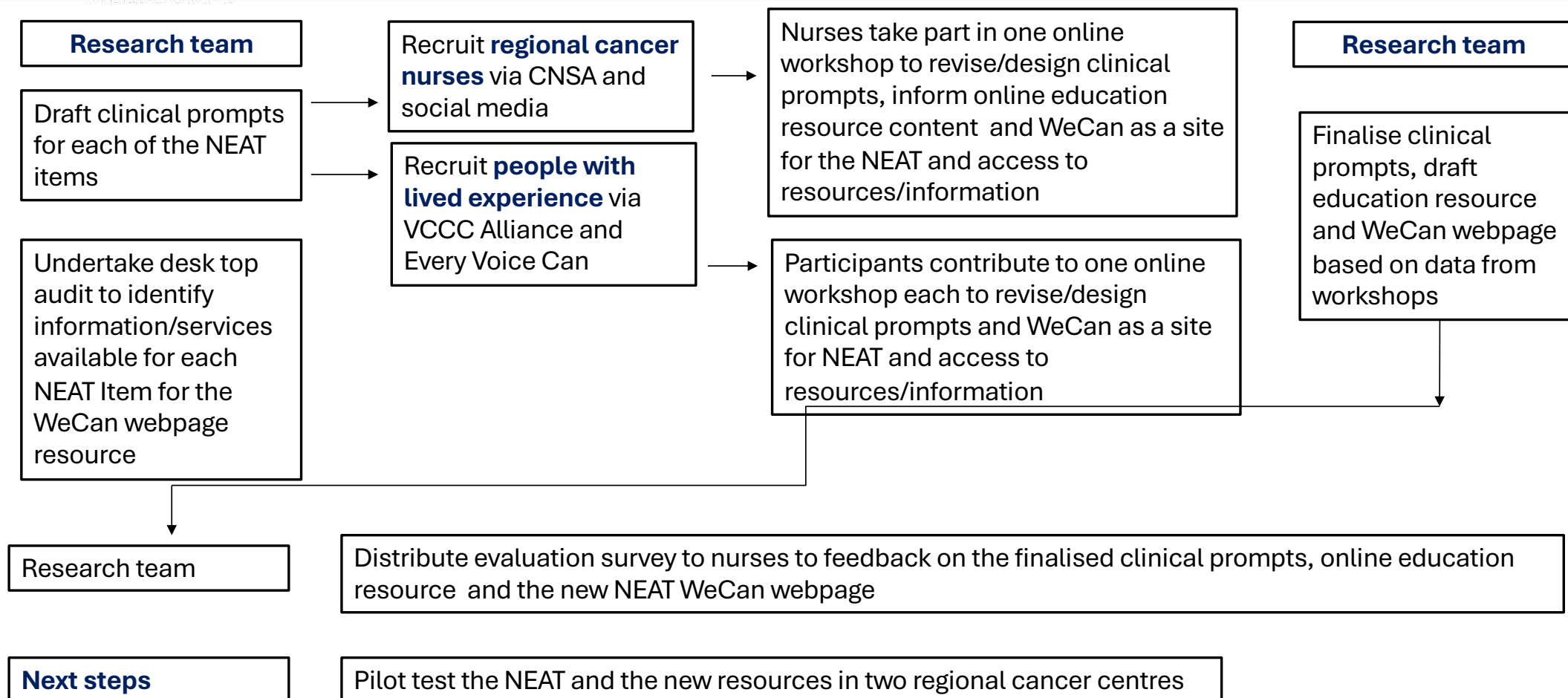


The NEAT

- An evidence-informed, point of care resource developed with cancer nurses and people with lived experience to help rapidly identify and initiate support for people at risk of poor health outcomes due to complex physical and social determinant of health needs (SDoH).
- 21 items across five domains, targeting SDoH proven to influence opportunity for equitable health outcomes.
- Standardising opportunity for equitable needs identification at scale
- Enables nurses to confidently explore SDoH

*Chung H, Crone E, Gough K, Hyatt A, Milne D, Krishnasamy M. Equity in cancer care: mixed methods clinical utility analysis of the Nursing Equity Assessment Tool (NEAT) to identify disadvantage in newly diagnosed cancer patients. Support Care Cancer. 2024

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Health/Lifestyle	Does the patient have health lifestyle factors likely to complicate their care including (tick which):		
	Obesity		
	Substance use/abuse (specify)		
Comorbidities	Sedentary Lifestyle		
	Does the patient have one or more comorbidities likely to complicate their cancer care?		
	Specify:		
SYMPTOMS			
Uncontrolled Symptoms	Does the patient have poorly or uncontrolled physical symptoms which require prompt intervention?		
SUMMARY			
Summary Question	Does the patient know where/how to access the support services they need?		



Underpinning principles

NCCN POLICY REPORT

Measuring and Addressing Health-Related Social Needs in Cancer

Victoria Hood, MPP¹; Alyssa Schatz, DrPH, MSW¹; Yelak Biru, MSc²; Loretta Erhunmwunsee, MD³; and Crystal S. Denlinger, MD¹

- HRSN screening is **not a “check the box” exercise** and should be conducted as a part of the care conversation. HRSN screening should be viewed as a **“discussion-based screening.”**
- Health organizations and systems must provide **training and education** on both why screening for and addressing HRSN is an integral part of quality care and how to do this well.
- HRSN screening and follow-up to **connect patients with relevant services** must be integrated into comprehensive care plans.

Phase 1

Co-design online workshops to:

- Establish patient and carer-endorsed clinical prompts to support implementation
- Establish content for education module
- Explore potential for **WeCan**
- 14 nurses and 6 lived experience participants

Online white board activity and discussion to:

- Talk through each of the NEAT items with *nurses and people with lived experience (prompts)* and the education content – what do nurses need to know to confidently use the NEAT in practice?

Recorded suggestions and incorporated into development of the prompts and education resource

Prompts and integration of NEAT into **WeCan endorsed by people with lived experience**



Phase 2

- Design and evaluation of the education resource (28 nurses responded to closed and open-ended online survey questions)
- Integrate the NEAT into WeCan
- Pilot test NEAT and its resources (clinical prompts and WeCan site) in two regional settings (3 nurses and 5 patients* – took part in study interviews)

Example of clinical prompts



Nurse Assessment: Are close family or primary caregiver highly anxious or distressed by the cancer diagnosis?	• How are those closest to you coping with your cancer diagnosis?
Has anyone in the patient's family done or said something that made the patient feel unsafe or afraid?	• Introductory/ framing statements: We often ask people about how safe they feel at home, as that's important to their overall health and wellbeing. Being diagnosed with cancer is distressing and can be very disruptive to family and personal relationships and so it is something that I routinely ask about. • Prompt: Has anyone in your family done or said something that made you (or your children) feel unsafe or afraid?
Does the patient have financial concerns which will require referral?	• Introductory/ framing statement: We know there are lots of hidden costs dealing with a cancer diagnosis and treatment so it's normal to have financial strains. • Prompts: If you are currently working, is it in a permanent or casual role? Do you have access to paid sick leave? Do you have access to savings or other forms of income? (i.e., Centrelink) Do you have any unpaid bills you need help with? In the last year, were there any times you ran out of food and couldn't afford to buy more? Do you need any help with other money worries?

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NEAT WeCan: (<https://wecan.org.au/neat/>)

NEAT

The Nursing Equity Assessment Tool (the NEAT) was developed to help identify things in peoples' day-to-day life that may make managing a cancer diagnosis and treatment especially difficult.

Below is a list of questions that patients, carers and health professionals have told us are important to ask at the start of each persons' cancer experience to make sure that people know where to get the help and support they need, as quickly as possible.

How to use this checklist:

- Click the headings to read through the topics
- Tick any topics you want to learn more about
- Click "submit" to see helpful links and resources
- You can also have the results page emailed to you for later



Tip: While you can answer the questions in any order, starting from the top and working your way through each question might help you think of things you hadn't considered. You will find information about each of the items you have ticked on the next page.

✓ Getting to the care that's right for you

Everyone deserves care that feels safe and respectful.

✓ Getting to the support you need

Where you live, who helps you, and your financial situation can make getting to appointments and treatment difficult.

✓ Your cancer diagnosis

Having a cancer that is hard to diagnose or is advanced at time of diagnosis can make a cancer diagnosis particularly challenging.

^ Getting to the care that's right for you

Everyone deserves care that feels safe and respectful.

Tick any topics you'd like information about:

- ☐ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cancer care
- ☐ Interpreter services
- ☐ Languages other than English
- ☐ Information resources that are easy to understand
- ☐ Cultural or religious need
- ☐ LGBTQIA+ cancer care

^ Getting to the support you need

Where you live, who helps you, and your financial situation can make getting to appointments and treatment difficult.

Tick any topics you'd like information about:

- ☐ Living arrangements and accommodation
- ☐ Distance from treatment or transport
- ☐ Impacts on family
- ☒ Impacts on work
- ☐ Impacts on school
- ☐ Social support
- ☐ Caregiver worries
- ☐ Feeling safe at home
- ☒ Financial stress

^ Your cancer diagnosis

Having a cancer that is hard to diagnose or is advanced at time of diagnosis can make a cancer diagnosis particularly challenging.

Tick any topics you'd like information about:

- ☐ Learning you have advanced cancer at time of diagnosis
- ☐ Learning you have a rare cancer, or cancer of unknown primary

The links below are based on the topics you selected in the NEAT form.



To keep a permanent link for this page, please copy the web address above.

Getting to the support you need

Impacts on work

Workplace Support

Cancer Council Victoria provide information help and support for those who want to know about working during and post cancer treatment, including your workplace rights. They also provide information for employers to help them provide a supportive workplace to those impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

Work after Cancer

The Work after Cancer resource offers information to support working during and after a cancer diagnosis, providing advice to people diagnosed with cancer, their loved ones, clinicians and employers about their options, rights and responsibilities.

Financial stress

Legal and financial

Cancer Council Victoria provide information and advice about managing finances and legal services available to people affected by cancer.

Money Smart

MoneySmart is a government initiative that helps Australians manage their money with free tools, tips and guidance.

National Debt Hotline

The National Debt Helpline offer free, independent and confidential phone access to financial counsellors.

Early access to your super

The Australian Tax Office provides information on the circumstances when you can access your super early.

Sickness allowance

Sickness allowance is an Australian government scheme whereby eligible people can access income support payment if they can't work or study because of illness, injury or disability.

Salvation Army financial assistance

The Salvation Army provide material and financial assistance for people that find themselves in financial hardship.



NEAT Education module: What content did participants want?



<https://vcccalliancelearn.org.au/the-neat>



The Nursing Equity Assessment Tool (NEAT) Education Resource

The NEAT education resource has been developed and evaluated as part of the NEAT-CARE study. We continue to refine it based on user feedback, so please complete the REDCap survey linked at the end of the course to help us improve it further.

This course has been developed to equip nurses with the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to patients' complex physical and social determinant of health needs in cancer care through the systematic application of the Nurse Equity Assessment Tool (NEAT).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, nurses will be able to:

- Recognise how social determinant of health needs influence patients' access to and experience of cancer care
- Demonstrate understanding of the purpose, structure, and application of the NEAT
- Apply the NEAT confidently as an integrated component of clinical consultations with people affected by cancer

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, nurses will be able to:

- Identify social determinants of health needs that may create barriers or facilitate access to cancer care
- Integrate the NEAT into routine clinical practice utilising patient-centred communication skills
- Recognise, and have skills to respond to complex physical and social determinant of health needs identified through use of the NEAT, and use data generated to inform comprehensive, person-centred care planning

Course Overview

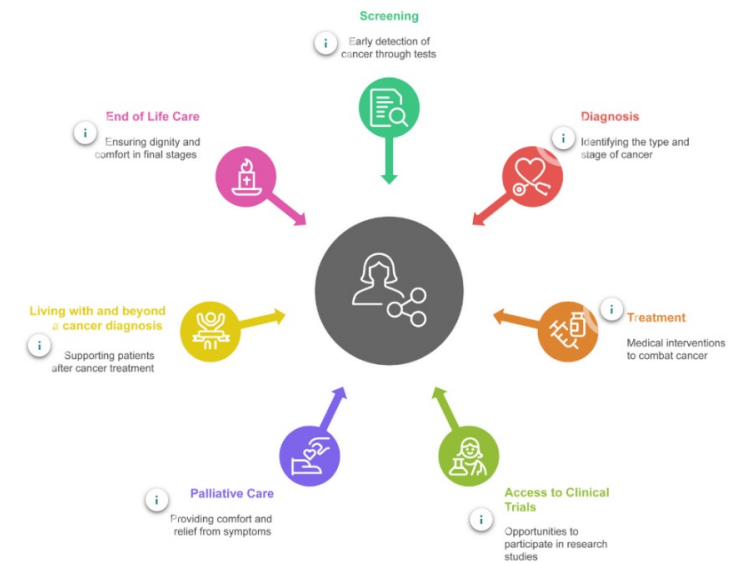
1. Introduction
2. What is The Nursing Equity Assessment Tool
3. Health Equity
4. Applying The NEAT
5. Essential Communication Skills
6. Using the NEAT in Practice
7. Summary

Learning components

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, nurses will be able to:

- 1 Recognise how social determinant of health needs influence patients' access to and experience of cancer care.
- 2 Demonstrate understanding of the purpose, structure, and application of the NEAT.
- 3 Apply the NEAT confidently as an integrated component of clinical consultations with people affected by cancer.



Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, nurses will be able to:

- ☐ Identify social determinants of health needs that may create barriers to or facilitate access to cancer care.
- ☐ Integrate the NEAT into routine clinical practice utilising patient-centred communication skills.
- ☐ Recognise and have skills to respond to complex physical and social determinant of health needs identified through use of the NEAT Use data generated by the NEAT

Reflection Exercise

Responding to emotional cues:

Export document

Responding to emotional cues:

Reflect on the content so far:

- Which NEAT item do you feel least confident discussing?
- How might you use the "Tell" phase to normalise this topic?

For example, if you're uncomfortable discussing financial concerns, you might normalise by saying: "Most people experience some financial impact from cancer treatment, between time off work, parking costs, and medications. It's really common and can add a lot of worry. There are resources and services specifically designed to help with these situations that I can share with you".

What did nurses think of the resource? n=28, responses in percentages

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Appropriateness: The overall content of the education resource is relevant to prepare nurses to use the NEAT in practice	4	4	0	64	29	= 93%
Practicability: Overall, the content of the education resource is sufficient to prepare nurses to use the NEAT in practice	4	0	4	75	18	= 93%
Acceptability of the education resource: Delivering the education resource as an online module is the best approach to provide access to the NEAT education resource	0	0	0	68	32	= 100%
	Much too short	A bit short	About right	A bit too long	Much too long	
Overall, the length of the education resource is:	0	14	86	0	0	
	Much too simplistic	A bit too simplistic	About right	A bit too complex	Much too complex	
Overall, the "level" of the content provided is:	0	11	89	0	0	
	Not at all suitable	Slightly suitable	Moderately suitable	Suitable	Very suitable	
Overall, the types of videos, quizzes, interactive activities included in the education resource to prepare nurses to use the NEAT are:	4	0	7	79	11	= 90%
Overall, the other resources (e.g. links to other websites, additional reading) listed to prepare nurses to use the NEAT are:	0	0	4	64	32	= 96%

Note: Modal responses are bolded and highlighted. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Open-text responses

Functionality issues:

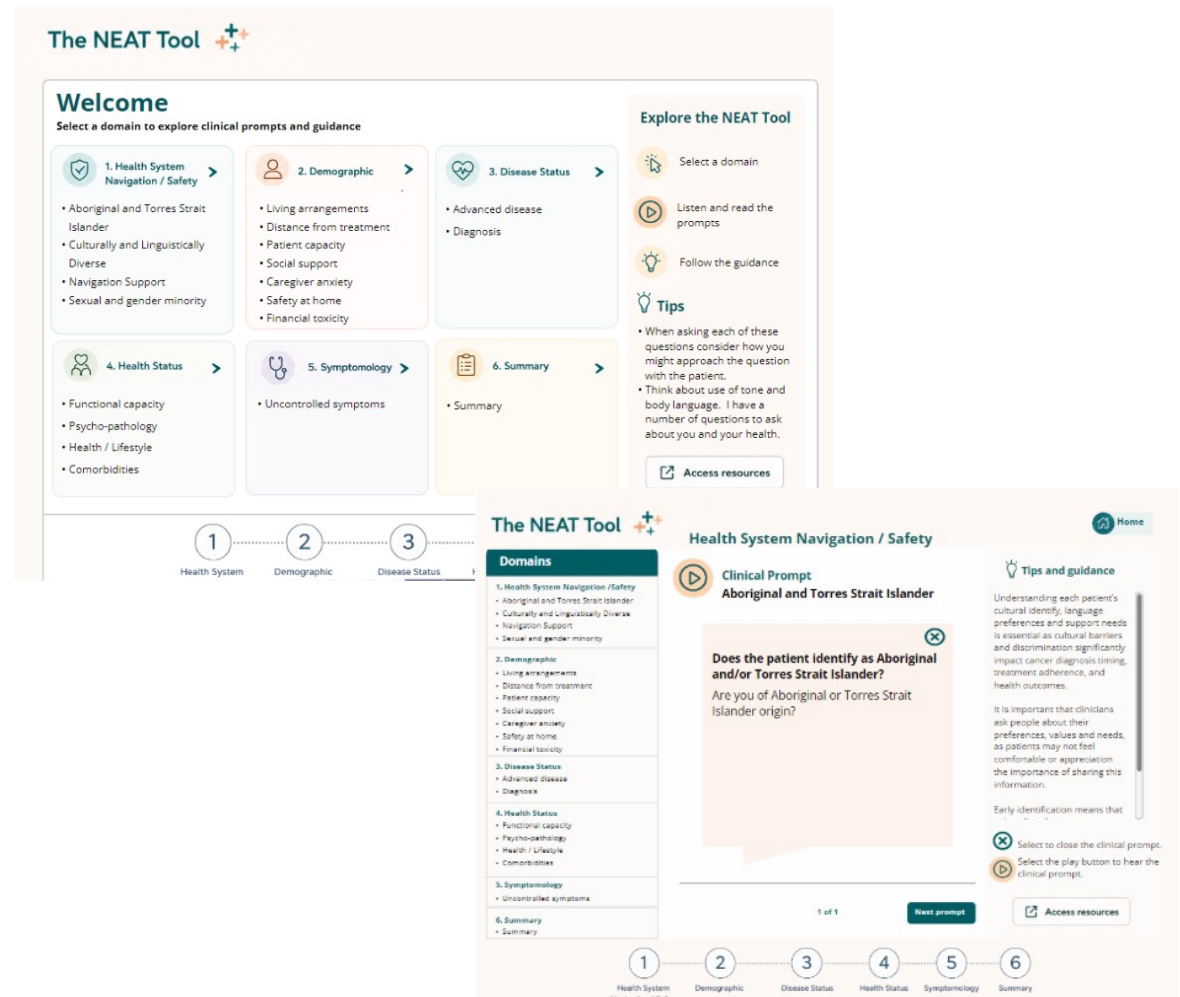
- **Limited content display area making information easy to miss (n=1)**
- **Poor flow in 'Apply the NEAT' slideshow suggesting missing content (n=1)**
- **Inability to run videos (n=1)**

Content improvements suggestions:

- **Mock NEAT assessment with case study (n=1)**
- **Audio version of communication framework (ask-tell-ask) (n=1)**
- **Expanded mental health assessment content (n=1)**

Dissemination platforms endorsed:

- **EviQ (n=5), CNSA (n=4), VCCC Alliance Centre for Cancer Education (n=3)**



NEAT Implementation Pack [Access here](#)

Coming soon!

Enhancing communication skills and mental health assessment



Tasks (5)

▼ Expand All

- ⋮ > ⓘ **Pre-Brief** Prelearning Task  
- ⋮ > 💬 **Talk with Brian** Conversation Task  
- ⋮ > 👁️ **Initial Reflection** Reflection Task  
- ⋮ > 💬 **Talk with Brian (Attempt #2)** Conversation Task  
- ⋮ > 👁️ **Final Reflection** Reflection Task  

 **SimConverse**

<https://www.simconverse.com/#engage>



NEXT - Ongoing revision

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- Embedding the NEAT in usual care
- **Exploring potential for real-world implementation in your place of work**
- Implementation pack and implementation session
- 2 REDCap surveys (UoM ethics approval)
 - Evaluation of the Education resource
 - De-identified feedback on experience of using the NEAT with 10 patients
- Future national trial
- **meik@unimelb.edu.au**