

UKONS is a guiding light for cancer nurses across the UK and beyond

by Edit Galambos (Lead Cancer Nurse, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust)



Taken in 2015 on the cancer ward in Southampton, where Edit worked as a staff nurse.

I have been a UKONS member since around 2015, just before I stepped into my first Band 6 Sister post. At the time, I was already working in cancer care and wanted to learn more, to deepen my knowledge, grow my confidence, and feel part of a wider professional community. Signing up to UKONS felt like a simple but important move. I was very keen to learn and develop, both clinically and as a future leader, and UKONS gave me access to resources and inspiration that really helped shape my journey.

As a Hungarian nurse working in the UK, being part of UKONS also helped me feel more connected and less alone in the early years of my career. It gave me the confidence to explore opportunities, take on new roles across different hospitals in the Wessex region, and stretch myself professionally. That support (both through shared learning and peer connection) really mattered. I am now the Lead Cancer Nurse at Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust. I am actively involved in the Lead Cancer Nurse and Personalised Cancer Care Member Interest Groups (MIGs), and I also follow the SACT and AOS MIGs, as their work ties in with personalised care. I have been a UKONS Champion for over a year, and I love talking to nurses about the conference: what it offers, why it matters, and how it can help them share their practice and develop professionally. I actively encourage nurses and AHPs to present their work, and I try to lead by example and support others to grow in confidence and visibility.

I have attended several UKONS conferences over the past nine years, and each one has been incredibly valuable to me. I particularly appreciate the educational sessions, which offer fresh insights and practical knowledge that I can directly apply in my clinical and leadership roles.

The conferences also provide an excellent opportunity to network with fellow cancer nurses and reconnect with colleagues I've worked with over the years. Last year's conference featured a memorable presentation by Professor Michael West on compassionate leadership. His talk was profoundly impactful — it highlighted the vital importance of kindness, empathy, and psychological safety in healthcare teams. It reminded me how powerful compassionate leadership can be in creating environments where both patients and staff feel valued and supported. That session reinforced my own commitment to leading with compassion and has inspired me to foster a culture of openness, psychological safety and wellbeing within my team.

We have embedded several UKONS resources within our Trust, including the AOS triage form and the SACT Passport. The UKONS AOS triage form has been invaluable for standardising patient assessments and ensuring timely, safe, and effective care for those presenting with acute oncology needs. It offers clear guidance that supports clinical decision-making and enhances communication across the multidisciplinary team. The UKONS SACT Passport is another great tool we use; it helps ensure that practice meets agreed standards and promotes ongoing professional development within the team. By using these UKONS resources, we not only improve care quality locally but also align our practice with national standards. This consistency benefits the wider cancer nursing community by promoting best practice, enhancing patient safety, and fostering collaboration across trusts. Resources like these help unify oncology nursing efforts, supporting better outcomes for patients and a stronger, more connected workforce.

I would like to congratulate UKONS on reaching this incredible 20-year milestone! Being part of this community has truly shaped my career and enriched my practice in so many ways. UKONS is a guiding light for cancer nurses across the UK and beyond, championing excellence, inclusion, and compassionate care. As we celebrate two decades, I hope UKONS continues to innovate and lead the way in supporting nurses from all backgrounds, especially those of us from the global majority, to flourish and bring our best to patients every day. Here is to the next 20 years of inspiring leadership, ground breaking education, and powerful connections that transform cancer care for everyone. Thank you for being such a vital force in our professional lives and for believing in the strength of nursing to change lives.