



Foundations of Cancer Disease Sites Series

Breast Cancer

COURSE SYLLABUS (CDSM00BREASTODM25)

2025-2027

Course Facilitators:

Donalda MacDonald, RN, CON(C)

Margaret Forbes, RN(EC), MN, NP, CON(C)

Course Format: eLearning

Contact Information:

Donalda MacDonald: Donalda.MacDonald@desouzainstitute.com

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Technical Support: support@desouzainstitute.com

Registration: Required

Prerequisite: *Cancer Care Basics*

This course is an update of the disease sites information in the Foundations of Oncology Nursing Practice – on demand (FOND) course, which covered breast, lung, colorectal and prostate cancer. **If you have completed Foundations in Oncology Nursing Practice prior to 2025, do not take this course unless you wish to review an updated version of the previous disease site content.**

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In Canada, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in females and is thought of as a group of diseases, each with different characteristics, prognoses, and responses to therapies. This course introduces you to breast cancer epidemiology, pathology, screening, diagnosis, and treatment, covering the foundational knowledge you need to provide nursing care to patients with breast cancer and their families. This online course builds on what you learned in *Foundations of Oncology Nursing Practice* or *Cancer Care Basics*.

This course has **three modules and a final quiz**.

- Module 1 *Pathology and Epidemiology*: covers normal anatomy of the breast, the pathogenesis of breast cancer, and the risk factors that put people at higher risk of developing breast cancer.
- Module 2 *Diagnosis and Staging*: covers screening guidelines, presenting symptoms, the diagnostic pathway, and staging.
- Module 3 *Treatment & Survivorship*: covers the treatments for each stage and type of breast cancer and the post-treatment considerations.
- The **final quiz** is a case study where you will apply your knowledge to the care of a patient living with breast cancer.

This is a self-paced course, meaning you complete the course at your own pace, but the course must be completed within **6 weeks from the time you register** for the course (this date is found on the course information page in *My Account*).

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Locate the gross anatomical features of the breast, and the major groups of lymph nodes that drain the breast
- Describe how the type, grade and biomarker status of breast cancer impacts prognosis and treatment
- Describe the trends in breast cancer incidence and mortality within Canada.
- Identify the risk factors associated with developing breast cancer including inherited genetic mutations.
- List the prognostic factors that impact breast cancer mortality.
- Outline the Canadian breast cancer screening guidelines
- Identify the signs and symptoms of newly diagnosed breast cancer, metastatic breast cancer or locally recurrent breast cancer
- Describe the diagnostic pathway for breast cancer

- Describe the TNM staging system for breast cancer and how an anatomical stage group is assigned
- List the factors considered when choosing breast conserving surgery vs. total mastectomy
- Describe the benefits and risks for sentinel lymph node biopsy and axillary node dissection
- Describe the types of breast reconstruction for females.
- Explain the goals of neo-adjuvant, adjuvant and metastatic systemic and radiation therapy for breast cancer in both the early stage and metastatic settings
- Identify the unique aspects of treating triple negative breast cancer
- Describe gene-expression assay testing and its use in the management of early-stage breast cancer
- Describe side effects from surgery, radiation and systemic therapy for breast cancer
- Identify post-treatment nursing considerations for the patient and family after surgery, radiation and systemic therapy
- Describe the recommended follow-up activities post treatment for breast cancer

Course content and resources provided in this course are based on best practice guidelines from provincial and national bodies. Local protocols and policies vary among healthcare organizations; please consult educators within your organization if you have specific questions related to local protocols and policies.

C. de Souza DESIGNATION CREDITS

Domain of Practice Treatment and Delivery of Evidence Based Care

Learning Hours 3 hours

de Souza Credit *You must complete a **minimum of 3** foundations of disease sites courses to earn de Souza credits.*

3 disease sites = 0.125 credits

6 disease sites = 0.25 credits

9 disease sites = 0.325 credits

12 and over disease sites = 0.5 credits

About the *Foundations of Cancer Disease Sites Series*

The *Foundations of Cancer Disease Sites Series* will consist of **over twenty cancer disease site courses** that you can select and combine to fit your clinical practice needs.

Currently disease sites courses in the series are:

- Sarcoma
- Skin cancer
- Esophageal cancer
- Stomach cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Liver cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Testicular cancer
- Brain cancer
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Colorectal cancer
- Hematological Malignancies
- Cervix cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Bladder cancer

We will continue to update and add cancer disease sites to the course series:

<https://www.desouzainstitute.com/cdsm>

D. MODES OF LEARNING

The eLearning environment fosters a self-directed approach. You can progress through the modules and exercises at a convenient time, at home or work.

- **eLearning Modules:** Modules were developed by the de Souza education team to reflect the latest knowledge in breast cancer. The content is up-to-date and includes interactive application exercises and links to the latest clinical guidelines. There are downloadable PDFs.
- **Study Guides:** A fillable ± printable study guide is available for each module that you can print and fill in as you progress through the interactive course modules.

E. MODES OF EVALUATION

As part of the evaluation process, you are required to complete the following:

- **Participant Baseline Survey:** This survey assesses your knowledge, attitude, confidence before you begin the eLearning modules for the course.
- **eLearning modules:** You must complete all modules by course end date.

- **Final Quiz:** There is one case-study based quiz in this course consisting of 12 questions. You must answer 9/12 questions correctly (75%) to pass. **Note:** the quiz is open book and you have two attempts at the quiz to achieve a passing grade. You are required to complete the quiz independently.
- **Participant Post-course Evaluation:** At the end of the course, this evaluation collects your feedback on whether the content met your professional practice needs. These surveys are facilitated electronically through eLearning.

When you have successfully met all the above requirements, you will receive **3 learning hours** as well as credit towards obtaining your de Souza designation. An email will be sent to you containing instructions on how to download your **certificate of completion** via your “My Account”.

F. EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Expect to dedicate 1-3 hours a week to complete this course within the 6-week timeframe.

Your course activity completion will be reflected in your **grade book**. You must complete all modules and all other course requirements within **6 weeks from the time you register** for the course. You can find your course completion date in your MyAccount.

G. FACILITATOR AVAILABILITY

This course is **self-directed**. However, a course facilitator is available to:

- Answer your questions related to course content.
- Collaborate with you to problem solve challenges related to course quizzes and course completion.

You can expect the facilitator to respond to your questions within 24-hours during the week and within 48 hours on the weekend.

Your facilitators can be reached at support@desouzainstitute.com or:

- Donalda MacDonald: Donalda.MacDonald@desouzainstitute.com
- Margaret Forbes: Margaret.Forbes@desouzainstitute.com

Technical support is available by contacting support@desouzainstitute.com

H. COURSE AUTHOR & FACILITATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Course Author & Facilitator

Donalda MacDonald, RN, CON(C)

Donalda has been an oncology nurse for 50 years working in both inpatient and outpatient units. She has been a primary nurse in lung and GI oncology as well as worked in the chemotherapy suite. For the last 10 years of her clinical career, she has been the solo instructor for the Sinai C.A.R.E. Cancer Care education series that she and her chemo colleagues developed targeting nurses new to oncology. For the past 15 years she has been an educator at the de Souza Institute. Donalda has served on the board of directors for the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology for 7 years. Donalda holds certification in oncology from the CNA. She has done item writing and exam review for the CNA Oncology Certification Exam. Donalda was nominated by her oncology peers and was one of 100 nurses from across Canada to receive the CNA Centennial Award honoring her work in education of novice oncology nurses. In 2014 she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology. She was the recipient of the Pfizer Award of Excellence in 2023.

Course Author & Co-Facilitator

Margaret Forbes, RN (EC), MN, NP, CON(C)

Margaret is a nurse practitioner with 34 years of oncology experience. She recently practiced as a nurse practitioner in complex malignant hematology including stem cell transplant and cellular therapies at the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre. Margaret also has a wide variety of clinical experiences in the treatment and management of patients with solid tumours with a focus on breast cancer. She was the clinical lead in the development of the cancer survivorship program at the Juravinski Cancer Centre. Margaret has participated in research as both a co-principal investigator and co-investigator in multiple studies. Margaret has held various nursing leadership roles, most recently as a nurse practitioner lead in complex malignant hematology. In 2016, Margaret was the recipient of the prestigious Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO-ACIO) Pfizer Award of Excellence in Nursing Leadership. In 2018 Margaret led the conceptualization and development of the Ron and Nancy Clark Nurse Practitioner Fellowship in Hematology at the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre. Margaret is an assistant clinical professor at McMaster University School of Nursing. She has recently joined the de Souza Institute as an advanced practice nurse educator. Margaret believes that a strong foundation in oncology knowledge will inspire nurses and other health care providers to become confident, competent and enthusiastic about providing excellence in patient care for people and families experiencing cancer.

I. VIRTUAL LIBRARY

de Souza Institute has a virtual library that can be accessed to those registered in this course or any other de Souza Institute continuing education program. This resource enables you to access over 1500 e-Journals, 200 e-books and 8 on-line databases such as CINAHL or Ovid-Medline. You can use the virtual library to access the required reading materials for your course. The virtual library can be accessed 24 hours a day at any location that has internet access using a login and password.

The direct link is <https://library.desouzainstitute.com/login>.

J. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

eLearning Centre Orientation

The eLearning Centre Orientation is designed to introduce you to online learning and to help you understand how to navigate through the de Souza Institute eLearning centre and courses. It is strongly recommended that you complete this orientation so that you will be able to successfully navigate de Souza's eLearning environment.

de Souza Institute Support

If you have questions about the content of a course please email your course facilitator.

If you need assistance accessing or navigating the eLearning Centre, please refer to the eLearning Orientation course. If you have questions or have any general technical difficulties, please contact support@desouzainstitute.com.

K. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Click the links below to review de Souza's Policies.

[Academic Honesty and Copyright Policy](#)

[Cancellations, Incomplete and No Show Policy](#)

[Request for Accommodation Policy](#)

If you are experiencing difficulty completing this course in a timely way, please review the above policies and contact the course facilitator to help you make a plan to support your learning and course completion.