



Foundations of Cancer Disease Sites Series

# Head & Neck Cancers

COURSE SYLLABUS  
(CDSM00HEADNECKODM25)

2025-2026

**Course Facilitators:**

Donalda MacDonald RN, CON(C)

Allison Loucks, RN, MN, CON©

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**Course Format:** eLearning

**Contact Information and Technical Support:** [support@desouzainstitute.com](mailto:support@desouzainstitute.com)

**Registration:** Required

**Prerequisite:** *Foundations in Oncology Nursing Practice or Cancer Care Basics*

## A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although there are many types of head and neck cancers, this course will introduce you to two of these: laryngeal cancer and oropharyngeal cancer. Cancers of the head and neck are often curable when caught in early stages. Most head and neck cancers are preventable and usually affect people aged 45 and older; predominantly males. Incidence, prevalence, risk factors, pathophysiology, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up care, and survivorship issues related to head and neck cancer will be discussed, highlighting the role of nurses. This online course builds on what you learned in *Foundations of Oncology Nursing Practice* or *Cancer Care Basics*.

Within the course modules, checkpoints will assess your newly acquired knowledge. Fillable study guides and downloadable PDFs provide you with take-away resources for clinical practice. (Filling out the study guides is optional and provides a great resource for future use.)

The **final quizzes** consist of two case studies (i.e., one each for laryngeal cancer and oropharyngeal cancer) where you will apply your knowledge to the care of patients living with head and neck cancers.

Although you can complete the various components of the course at your own pace, the course must be completed within **6 weeks from the time you register** for the course (this date can be found on the course information page in *My Account*).

### 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. The first disease sites courses in the series are:

- Bladder Cancer
- Brain Cancer
- Breast Cancer
- Cervical Cancer
- Colorectal Cancer
- Esophageal Cancer
- Head and Neck Cancers
- Hematological Malignancies (Multiple Myeloma, Lymphoma, and Leukemia)
- Kidney Cancer
- Liver Cancer
- Lung Cancer
- Ovarian Cancer
- Pancreatic Cancer
- Prostate Cancer
- Sarcoma
- Skin Cancer
- Stomach Cancer
- Testicular Cancer

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

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

## B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the difference between normal and malignant anatomy and physiology of the larynx and the oropharynx
- Identify risk factors for developing laryngeal and oropharyngeal cancers
- Describe prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies for laryngeal and oropharyngeal cancers
- Teach patients how to manage treatment related side-effects and follow-up practices

Course content and resources provided in this course are based on best practice guidelines from provincial, national, and international organizations. 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

<b>Domain of Practice</b>	Treatment and Delivery of Evidence Based Care
<b>Learning Hours</b>	3 hours
<b>de Souza Credit</b>	<p><i>You must complete a <b>minimum of 3</b> foundations of disease sites courses to earn de Souza credits.</i></p> <p>3 disease sites = 0.125 credits          6 disease sites = 0.25 credits          9 disease sites = 0.325 credits          12+ disease sites = 0.5 credits</p>

## D. MODES OF LEARNING

The eLearning environment fosters a self-directed approach. You can progress through the modules and exercises at a time that is convenient for you.

- **eLearning Modules:** Modules were developed by the de Souza education team to reflect the latest knowledge in cervical cancer. The content is up-to-date and includes interactive application exercises and links to the latest clinical guidelines.
- **Study Guides:** A 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 the course end date. You can find your specific course end date in your “MyAccount”.
- **Final Quiz:** There are two case-study based quizzes in this course:
  - Laryngeal – there are 4 questions. You must answer 3/4 questions correctly (75%) to pass
  - Oropharyngeal – there are 10 questions. You must answer 7/10 questions correctly (70%) to pass.
- **Note:** Each quiz is open book and you have **two attempts** at each quiz to achieve a passing grade. You are required to complete quizzes independently.
- **Participant Post-course Evaluation:** At the end of the course, you will be required to complete a “Participant Post Survey” where you can provide 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

To be successful in completing this course, you are strongly encouraged to set aside 1 to 2 hours each week to complete each section, as learning is self-directed. The total learning hours for this course are **3 hours**.

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. Your specific course end date can be found 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 are:

- Donalda MacDonald
- Allison Loucks

**Contact Information and Technical support** is available by contacting [support@desouzainstitute.com](mailto:support@desouzainstitute.com)

## H. COURSE AUTHOR & FACILITATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Course Author

### **Christine Zywine, RN(EC), MScN, NP**

Christine Zywine is a recently retired Nurse Practitioner. Over her career, Christine worked in large academic hospital settings and cancer clinics; and in various roles, from bedside ICU nurse to nurse practitioner in oncology. Her primary areas of practice and clinical interests focused on palliative care and palliative radiation, as well as managing patients undergoing chemoradiation for head and neck cancers. As part of the multidisciplinary team, Christine supported and managed patients with various head and neck cancers from diagnosis through concurrent treatment and into follow-up. These patients specifically required management of their treatment-related side effects, as well as ongoing psychosocial support and palliation. Christine continues to contribute to oncology nursing by her involvement in oncology nurse education. In retirement, Christine enjoys cooking, travel and visiting her grandchildren in Northern Ontario.

Facilitator

### **Donalda MacDonald, RN, CON(C)**

Donalda has been an oncology nurse for 45 years working in both inpatient and outpatient units. She has been a primary nurse in lung and GI oncology and 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. 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.

Facilitator

### **Allison Loucks, RN, MN, CON(C)**

Allison has 23 years of nursing experience, 16 of them in Oncology. In 2011, as an Advanced Practice Nurse Educator in the Acute Care Oncology Program at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, she supported nurses in both ambulatory and inpatient settings to enhance their knowledge and competency in symptom assessment and management, and in urgent/emergent oncology nursing interventions. In 2015, she joined the Geriatric Oncology Program as a Clinical Nurse Specialist. Through research and publications, Allison and her team articulated the needs of this vulnerable population and identified tools required to provide adequate care.

Allison holds a CNA certification in oncology since 2015. She was the recipient of the 2016 Esther and Saul Baker Award in Geriatrics at University Health Network (UHN) and Mount Sinai Hospital. She earned her Master of Nursing at Athabasca University in 2019.

In 2023, Allison joined the Advanced Practice Nursing team at the Odette Cancer Centre at Sunnybrook Hospital, where she collaborated in numerous quality improvement strategies to enhance cancer care delivery. In 2024, she became a Facilitator in the de Souza Institute Provincial Standardized Chemotherapy and Biotherapy course. She recently joined the de Souza Institute as an Advance Practice Nurse Educator.

## **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 will 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](mailto:support@desouzainstitute.com).

## K. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Click the links below to review de Souza Institute Policies:

[Academic Honesty and Copyright Policy](#)

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

[Request for Accommodation Policy](#)

Course content and resources are based on provincial and national best practice guidelines. Please consult educators within your organization if you have specific questions related to local protocols and policies.

If you are experiencing difficulty completing this course in a timely way, please review the above policies and contact [support@desouzainstitute.com](mailto:support@desouzainstitute.com).