

# EXPLORING DISTRIBUTION OF THE ADULT CANCER NURSING WORKFORCE IN ENGLAND

Georgina Smerald, Rachel White and Jacqueline Goodchild

## Background

There is growing evidence of the importance of clinical nurse specialists in providing care and support to people living with cancer. Clinical nurse specialists also play a pivotal role in bringing professionals together in multi-disciplinary teams.<sup>1,2</sup> Given the essential role of cancer specialist nurses, it is important to understand the size, shape and location of the adult cancer nursing workforce in planning for the future. In 2017 Macmillan undertook a census of the adult cancer nursing workforce in England and Wales. Data in this poster is England only.

## Methods

The Census in 2017 built upon the methodology used in the 2014.<sup>3</sup> The census collected data on cancer specialist nurses, specialist chemotherapy nurses, specialist palliative care nurses who frequently see cancer and cancer support workers. There were clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, all roles had to be employed by the NHS and spend 50% or more of their role directly supporting people living with cancer. The census provides a snapshot of the workforce on a single day: 9 October 2017. The data was collected using a bespoke data-collection tool developed in Excel. Each hospital trust completed the tool and submitted data for their organisation. The data was then cleaned and analysed. Quality Health managed the fieldwork for the census.

Additional analysis was undertaken to explore the distribution of cancer specialist nurses and support workers by hospital trust in England.

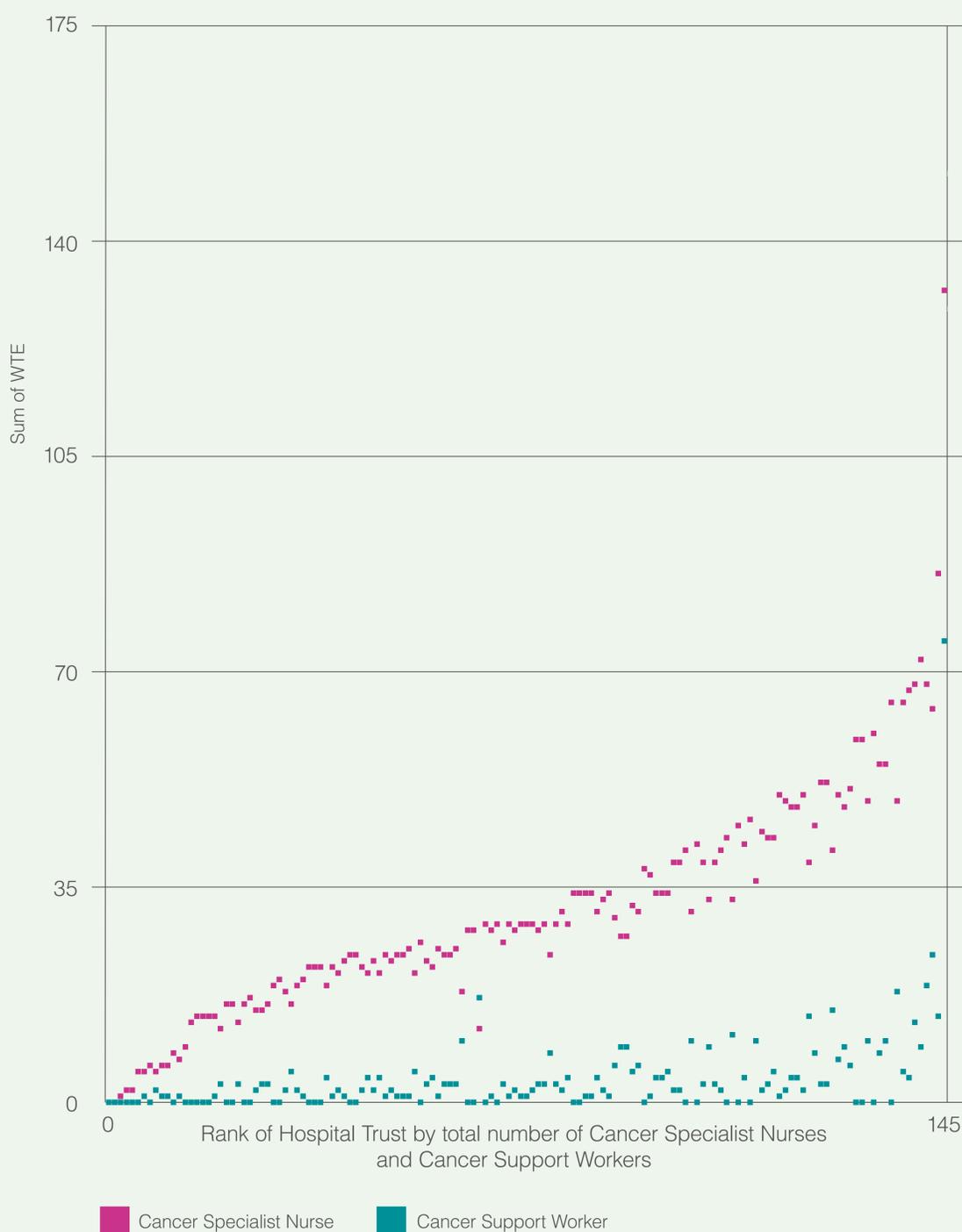
## Conclusion

Naturally there will be variation in the number of nurses and support workers in hospital trusts as not all trusts are the same size. Trusts with the largest numbers of cancer specialist nurses and support workers tend to be the large specialist cancer centres who will be treating large numbers of patients. However there is only a 0.6 correlation between the number of specialist cancer nurses and the numbers of cancer support workers. Apart from a few trusts the majority of trusts only have a few workers regardless of the number of cancer specialist nurses. This indicates that larger nursing teams may not have many support workers to help with day to day activities and engaging with patients. Given the descriptive nature of the census data more research needs to be undertaken to understand whether there is the right mix of support workers and specialist cancer nurses.

## Results

There is variation in the number of specialist cancer nurses and support workers by trust. The biggest distribution of nurses and support workers are concentrated in the top 20% trusts based on count of whole time equivalent. The majority of trusts (72%) who completed the census for support workers have between 1–5 support workers. The majority of trusts (31%) have between 21–30 cancer specialist nurses. The trusts with large numbers of support workers and cancer specialist nurses were large specialist cancer centres.

Number of Specialist Cancer Nurses and Support Workers by individual trusts



## References

- 1 NHS England, Quality Health, Cancer Patient Experience Survey National Report 2016. <http://www.ncpes.co.uk/index.php/reports/2016-reports> (accessed January 2018).
- 2 NCAT, 2010. Excellence in Cancer Care: the Contribution of the Clinical Nurse Specialist. <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/documents/aboutus/commissioners/excellenceincancercarethecontributionoftheclinicalnursespecialist.pdf> (accessed June 2017).
- 3 Macmillan Cancer Support, 2014. Specialist adult cancer nurses in England- A census of the specialist adult cancer nursing workforce in the UK, 2014. [https://www.macmillan.org.uk/\\_images/cns-census-report-england\\_tcm9-283671.pdf](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/_images/cns-census-report-england_tcm9-283671.pdf) (assessed October, 2018)