



# certification/news

The Newsletter of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation  
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## Certified Nurses Day: Celebrating the Best Among Us

Deirdre Young, RN, BSN, OCN®, CBCN®

Even if I live to see 100 years old, I will never forget the day that I received my oncology nursing certification. I had spent my first three years in nursing at a large academic teaching hospital which gave me an opportunity to learn my craft from many truly amazing, gifted nurses who mentored me. I was drawn to the badges that displayed their credentials and marked them as being certified nurses. My goal was to wear that coveted credential and I vowed to earn it as soon as I was eligible. That was thirty three years ago and my certification means as much to me today as it did the day I earned it.

If life is truly a celebration of events and achievements—birthdays, weddings, christenings, B'nai Mitzvahs, graduations and other milestones that

make our lives joyful and sweet—then by all means we should mark our calendars for March 19<sup>th</sup>; National Certified Nurses Day. The American Nurses' Credentialing Center (ANCC) selected this noteworthy day because it marks the birthday of the late Margretta Madden Styles, EdD, RN, FAAN (1903-2005), who was known as the "Mother of Nurse Credentialing" and a pioneer for nursing certification. The legacy of this remarkable woman lies in the importance of nursing certification for all of us as professionals and how certification can contribute to better patient outcomes.

Those outside of healthcare fail to understand that the values of integrity, accountability, and stewardship are all hallmarks of national nursing

certification and that these values signify the importance of certification for nurses everywhere. One of the best ways that we as nurses and institutions can help educate the public and patients that we serve about the importance of certification is to mark the day with recognition of these remarkable men and women by celebrating their achievements. Celebrations in the United States and throughout the world take many forms, from the simple to the elaborate.

Celebration of Certified Nurses' Day also gives our nursing brethren an opportunity to demonstrate their creative skills and talents, as we have witnessed at my hospital in years past. One of the most obvious methods is displaying banners, posters and signs

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## International Insights

### Certified Nurses Rise and Shine at King Faisal Specialist Hospital

Mohamad Younes, RN, BScN, CPHON®

King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre (KFSH&RC) is a state-of-the-art 894 bed hospital located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It earned Magnet designation in 2014 as one of only seven international Magnet facilities. KFSH&RC is the nationwide referral center for oncology, organ transplantation, genetic disorders, neurosciences and cardiovascular diseases.

A wide range of tertiary, secondary and primary health care services are provided for patients of many surrounding countries in the Middle East, including treatment of over 3,300 new adult and pediatric oncology patients.

KFSH&RC has a total staff of 6,946, embracing 63 different nationalities. The nursing staff totals 1,942. Despite their varied backgrounds and home

countries, each is committed to providing superior patient care.

KFSH&RC-Riyadh attracts innovative and proactive nurses with a passion for excellence and a desire to attain specialty certification. Yet, international nurses face unique barriers to reaching that goal. For example, eligibility criteria set by many certifying bodies require US licensure (or

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### Editor's Message: Finding Spring After Winter

Erica Fischer-Carlidge, MSN, RN, CBCN®, AOCNS®

I often hear from nurses preparing for certification that it can seem overwhelming or “never ending;” not unlike winter often feels during the coldest, snowy days. Journalist Hal Borland wrote, “No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.” It seems as though Borland knew a few nurses pursuing certification. While the process of obtaining this sought after credential can be daunting, and the journey there long, there is always a ‘spring’ at the end; the enculturation of new knowledge into your practice, passing a certification exam or other personal goal attainment.

This issue our authors have brought ONS Leadership Weekend and the 2015 CPON® of the year to you right at home. You’ll also have the opportunity to view certification from the perspective of two different generations, the Millennial generation and those nearing retirement; you can learn about how one international institution helped nurses overcome barriers to obtain certification; and we’ll challenge you to think about why it’s important to celebrate Certified Nurses’ Day in your organization.

*Certification News* serves different purposes for each reader. A nurse

who is preparing for certification may find motivation to continue the journey or tips for preparation; a seasoned nurse or certification advocate may use the content to mentor those around them; a leader or board member of a professional organization may share it with their members to aid them in understanding the benefits of certification. The issue is filled with stories that are certainly the blossoms of spring after long winter journeys. Whatever the reason that you read *Certification News*, know there is thoughtful consideration to ensuring there is content to help you find your spring.



### Meet Denise Desrochers, 2015 CPON® of the Year

Lisa Bjorkelo, MSN, RN, CPON®, BMTCN™

Marie Denise Desrochers BSN, RN, CPON®, is the 2015 CPON® of the Year award winner. Desrochers, a University of Massachusetts (Lowell) graduate, has been a pediatric oncology nurse for 26 years. She spent the bulk of her career at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) where she worked for 21 years as both an inpatient and outpatient nurse in the oncology division. Desrochers’ colleagues at CHOP nominated her for the award shortly before she relocated to the Boston area, where she currently works at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in their pediatric outpatient clinic.

Desrocher is a dedicated supporter of pediatric hematology/oncology nursing and certification. She has been active in the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON) for over 25 years, serving as vice



president of the Greater Philadelphia Area Chapter, as well as being a key member of the group’s education committee. Many pediatric oncology/hematology events have benefited from her volunteer efforts. She has donated her time to Alex’s Lemonade Stand, CHOP’s Annual “Beyond Cancer” celebration and the Philadelphia Parkway Run Cancer Fundraiser. She is also an instructor for the APHON Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Provider course.

Desrochers’ focus has been to help nurses get certified, stay certified and celebrate their achievement. She explains that her passion for supporting certification and involvement in a professional organization stems from starting her pediatric hematology/oncology nursing career in a small program in Lansing, Michigan. Desrochers actively sought out the nursing resources, standards and support available from APHON as she cared for her patients. When she moved to a larger institution, she wanted to take leadership roles in her APHON chapter because she understood the important impact the organization can have across the country, especially in smaller programs. Likewise, certification sets a standard which nurses practicing in large or small institutions can strive to meet.

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## Parallel Perspectives: Certification for All Generations



### Certification and Retirement - What is Possible?

Lynn Czaplewski, MS, RN, ACNS-BC, CRNI, AOCNS®

After 44 years of nursing, my retirement is just around the corner. As a part of the baby boomer generation, I am among many nurses who have either already retired or are contemplating retirement. Along with the thought of retirement comes mixed feelings; excitement about not having to get up early along with the ability to do what one wants to do rather than what has to be done. On the other hand, the thought of leaving behind the profession I have loved and taking my years of nursing knowledge and experience away from formal practice is

somewhat daunting. I am committed to keeping up with oncology nursing knowledge and hope I will be able to find ways to share it with other nurses. The best way I can think of to do that is to maintain my certifications.

The first certification I achieved was as a Certified Registered Nurse Infusion (CRNI®) and then shortly after as an Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®) after I had been a nurse for about 15 years. At that time, certification programs were in their infancy. I was certified as an OCN® for 20 years and then went back to school for a Master of Sci-



ence degree (MS) to become a clinical nurse specialist (CNS). From there I earned certification as an Advanced Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist (AOCNS®) and have maintained that

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### When is the Right Time to Become a Certified Nurse?

#### Supporting Millennials in Their Efforts

Nicole Krist, MSN, CNS, AOCNS®, BMTCN™, OCN®

As more nurses are preparing for retirement, organizations are focusing on the next generation of nurses to help ensure the success of our profession. Nurses, both those retiring and those in leadership positions, need to support millennials at the beginning of their career. As a clinical nurse specialist, I'm frequently asked about nursing certification. I polled a group of millennials, certified nurses who have all been in practice less than ten years, about their experience.

All of these nurses happen to be OCN® certified; however, their comments could apply to other certifications as well. I have incorporated their thoughts with the answers I usually give to a nurse who is deciding when it's the right time to take a certification test.

*How long were you a nurse before you got certified?*

On average most of these nurses decided to become certified after about two years. It is important to look at the eligibility requirements for each exam, including the minimum number of practice hours required. The required practice hours helps to ensure that a novice nurse has experience in oncology.

#### *What made you decide to get certified?*

Many nurses said they became certified to pursue a promotion or advancement on the clinical ladder at their institution, as well as because it demonstrates acquired knowledge and proficiency in oncology. It shows an interest to continuing learning in the ever-changing field of caring for the oncology population. Patients also inquire about the various initials, pins, patches nurses have on their ID badge and like finding out the nurse providing their care is certified. Being a certi-

fied nurse also gives a nurse additional confidence in caring for oncology patients in all settings.

#### *What makes you maintain certification?*

For some, maintaining certification is a requirement for their position; however, most of the nurses I talked to like the ongoing educational opportunity it gives them. The advances and research in the field of oncology make continued learning a necessity to competently care for the oncology patient population. Maintaining certification is one way to accomplish this task. Nurses are proud to be certified and worked hard to pass their initial exam. They maintain it through continuing education (CE) and now focus on specific subjects based upon their Individual Learning Needs Assessment (ILNA) results for renewal.

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## Certified Nurses Day continued

throughout the hospitals and offices that announce Certified Nurses' Day and invite others to learn more about the remarkable history and purpose of certification. Facilities may host breakfasts, lunches or dinners to honor certified nurses. Personally, I still treasure (and wear) a large green button that was given to me some years back announcing to all that I was a "Nationally Certified Nurse". Balloon bouquets to decorate nursing units are a festive touch that can be enjoyed by nurses and patients alike. Cards or letters of recognition from hospital administrators to each certified nurse reminds us that we are valued and respected for what we have worked so hard to achieve. When possible, if budgets allow, a to-

ken gift of lapel pins or other recognition products are always sure to produce a smile from the recipient. If there are physician practices who are willing to sponsor a small treat of cupcakes or cookies to say thank you, by all means, engage their help. Another possible way of recognizing certified professionals is to create a Wall of Honor or recognition on nursing units to identify certified nurses; this is a great way to engage younger nurses who have not yet sought certification. After all, who wouldn't want to be one of the special professionals who have distinguished themselves by seeking certification and achieving it?

Perhaps the best way we can all celebrate Certified Nurses' Day is to

promote certification itself; explaining tirelessly to all who will listen what certification lends to the quality of patient care and what it means to you personally. The joy and celebration of March 19<sup>th</sup> is not so much about how much we spend, as how we spend the day and what we do to promote the goal of certification.

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) has a beautiful poster depicting a nurse with the caption, *"If That Exam Were A Patient, You Wouldn't Back Down."* Hopefully we will all commit ourselves to carry that message to nurses everywhere and increase the ranks of the best. Remember certified nurses on March 19<sup>th</sup> and take the time to thank them for the work that they do.

## International Insights continued

its equivalent) and some test items are focused on legislation or policies that are unique to the US. Despite these hurdles, the organization currently has 40 certified nurses in different specialty areas.

Specialty certification is a strategic goal at KFSH&RC-Riyadh, as it supports the hospital's vision and mission to deliver world renowned excellence in patient care. It is also an important component of being a Magnet institution. The Nursing Affairs Department has instituted processes to support nurses in pursuing certification. For instance, the Professional Development Council, which includes nurses in a variety of roles, sets goals for certification and provides recommendations to executive leadership regarding the support needed to achieve the required targets. From this council's work an internal policy and procedure was put in place several years ago to support nurses interested in pursuing specialty



certification. This policy incorporates reimbursement of certification/ recertification fees and cost of various resources

needed to prepare for the certification test. The policy also incorporates an annual monetary bonus for nurses who maintain their specialty certification.

Within the council, education coordinators and clinical instructors promote specialty certification in their areas, assist nurses with the application process and lead study groups to prepare for the certification exam.

Certified nurses who apply for a promotion receive additional merit points on their application, increasing their chances of being selected for the position. Certification also contributes to a higher annual performance appraisal score, which subsequently leads to an increase in the certified nurse's salary.

Moreover, certified nurses are more likely to be supported with full sponsorship to attend national and international conferences.

Certified nurses are also celebrated during the Nurse Recognition Week in May. Nursing Leadership held a special event during the week to recognize seven nurses who recently passed the OCN<sup>®</sup> certification exam and awarded them with a recognition certificate, an OCN<sup>®</sup> pin, and a letter from the Executive Director of Nursing Affairs.

When I interviewed a newly certified staff nurse for this article, Hassan Zahreddine, RN, BSN, OCN<sup>®</sup>, Dip. Edu commented, "Getting certified has boosted my knowledge and confidence levels and strengthened the trust relationship with my patients and their families."

Congratulations to the nurses at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre for their creative commitment to certification.



## What is Chapter Leadership Workshop (and how does certification relate)?

Theresa M. Gannon, BSN, RN, OCN®

Throughout the year, the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) works diligently to meet the needs of its 39,000 members, including chapter members. One intentional way ONS accomplishes this is by inviting ONS Chapter and Chapter-In-Progress (CHIP) leaders to a Chapter Leadership Workshop held each year in its headquarter city, Pittsburgh. ONCC recognizes the value in developing leadership skills of oncology nurses, and is a co-sponsor of the event. The 3-day weekend includes an opportunity for the Society’s leaders to mentor chapter leaders, and a forum for participants to provide feedback on the organizations’ future plans. This meeting of today’s and tomorrow’s leaders is one way to ensure a sustainable organization in the approaching years.

Last July, 300 enthusiastic attendees participated in Chapter Leadership Workshop. I was thrilled to strengthen my own skills by sharing ideas with nurse leaders from diverse geographic areas, educational backgrounds, work environments and generations. Many of these chapter leaders are certified. As oncology nurses striving to strengthen our leadership potential and

our confidence, this weekend was an incredible opportunity for growth and development. As President-Elect of my Southeast Minnesota ONS Chapter, I feel strongly that the Chapter Leadership Workshop has helped me prepare for my leadership role.

### Calling the next generation forward

One of the principal themes for discussion followed the keynote presenter, Shira Harrington, “Engaging the Next Generation Today: A Fresh Look at Your Multigenerational Members”. The agenda topic was preparing for growth in chapter membership, by attracting new and younger members – often referred to as “millennials”.

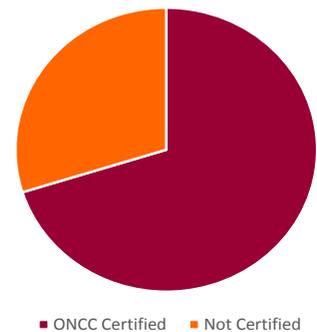
While the weekend focused on growing chapter membership, many of the topics were meaningful when considering growing our organizations. As the nursing workforce ages, the ways in which multiple generations work side by side on a daily basis can sometimes be confusing. The subject was also well-timed as local chapters are seeking innovative ways to draw new members to their professional association. Ms. Harrington offered practical advice while sharing a historical perspective

of the Baby Boomers, Gen Xer’s, Generation Y – also known as Millennials. What an insightful presentation of how differently we all work to achieve similar goals, regardless of our setting.

### Certified Nurses as Chapter Leaders

What’s the connection between chapter leaders and certification? A quick look at current chapter leaders shows that 70% of these leaders (Chapter board members or committee leaders) are currently oncology certified. In comparison, about 46% of ONS chapter members are oncology certified.

Certification Among ONS Chapter Leaders



## Lori Williams Elected to ONCC Board of Directors



Loretta (Lori) Williams, PhD, RN, APRN, OCN®, AOCN® was recently elected to the ONCC Board of Directors. Williams is Assistant Professor at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. She will begin her three-year term at the close

of the Business Meeting during the ONS Congress on April 30, 2016.

Williams’ leadership experience includes previous service on ONCC Test Development Committees and Passing Score task forces. She served on the ONS Board of Directors, and as chair of the Congress Planning Team several years ago. Williams also brings extensive experience in research and

patient advocacy to the Board.

Williams was elected in the ONCC Board election that ended in December 2015. To encourage voting, ONCC pledged to donate \$1 to the ONS Foundation for each vote cast. When the election ended, 1,939 certified nurses had voted and \$1,939 was donated to the ONS Foundation. Thanks to all who voted.

## Certification and Retirement continued

certification for almost 9 years. In addition, I am also certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) as an Adult Health Clinical Nurse Specialist-Board Certified (ACNS-BC).

Initially I sought certification because I was a graduate of a diploma nursing program and looked to certification to increase my knowledge and credibility in the specialties of infusion and oncology nursing practice. After completing my BSN and MS degrees certification became the basis for my nursing practice in oncology and infusion nursing by providing a framework

for expert knowledge. I truly feel that my growth and successes in nursing are directly correlated to certification. To me, certification demonstrates commitment to a specialty and life-long learning, and the desire to provide safe, expert care to my patients above and beyond what is required by an employer. It is about professional growth and recognition by patients, colleagues and employers as someone who has gone the extra mile to increase knowledge and expertise.

In retirement I do not yet know what opportunities may come my way related to nursing, but I do not plan on waiting

around to see what comes my way. Consulting in my specialties, teaching, volunteering in a healthcare-related setting all are appealing to me. I am not ready to give up my nursing knowledge! By maintaining my certifications until I am ready to completely leave nursing, I am committing to continued learning. I am looking forward to having more time to read nursing journals and potentially authoring a manuscript or two. Retired nurses do not shrivel up and die! We are a strong force with years to give back to our beloved profession. Certification helps lead the way!

## When is the Right Time? continued

*Any drawbacks or hesitation about certification?*

Not many drawbacks were identified to prevent nurses from becoming or maintaining certification. Most did acknowledge the cost factor; however, felt it was a personal accomplishment and worth it to say they are a certified nurse. Having worked with nurses who did not pass the exam the first time, I've seen how it can affect one's confidence and become expensive to retake a second time. Often times this was not a reflection of their knowledge, but rather of testing anxiety. I work with these nurses on testing strategies for overcoming this anxiety and only encourage them to apply again once they are ready. I find if a nurse retakes the test before he/she is mentally ready the results are often the same and can further affect their confidence. If a nurse does need to retest, it is important to look at their score report from the previous test. It outlines areas to focus on the next time they take the exam and



can be a useful when preparing to retake the test.

*Any tips for a nurse looking to become certified/maintain certification?*

Start early, start reading, and whenever you do not know something look it up. Most importantly: practice, practice, practice. There are both free practice tests and ones available for a nominal fee. It is also important to read through the rationale provided on the practice tests. There is often a lot of information you can extract from the information provided there.

Obtaining certification is a personal accomplishment that every nurse can be proud of. It is important to know when it is the correct time for you to sit for one of the exams. It is also important to decide which certification is best for you based on your specialty. It is also important to note that CE can often be applied to renewal of multiple certifications. Certification can make nurses more marketable, whether looking to move up into a new role or applying for a new job. There are many reasons a nurse may consider sitting for an exam. I obtained my first certification when I decided to start traveling after being a nurse for about a year and a half. It is not uncommon for nurses early in their career to explore this option and it makes you stand out among your peers.

As more nurses are retiring we need to support the next generation of oncology nurses and encourage them to become certified nurses.

**Are you connected with the oncology certified nurse community? Join Us!**



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[twitter.com/oncc](https://twitter.com/oncc)



CPON® Year continued

As a promoter of certification, Desrochers was instrumental in initiating Certified Nurses Day™ at CHOP and implementing nursing ID “badge buddies,” which identified all certified nurses at the institution. In addition, she helped nursing leaders to recognize the BMTCN™ exam, and successfully lobbied the institution to reimburse the cost when a nurse passes the exam.

Desrochers believes that offering nursing education programs with free CE contact hours helps nurses to main-

tain their certification. To that end, she volunteered to teach (on her own time) a CPHON® review course, which offered eight contact hours of accredited CE, to help prepare nurses for the exam and assist in meeting the eligibility criteria. As part of the chapter education committee, she planned journal clubs and other free educational offerings. For all programs, Desrochers completed the application process required to offer continuing education credits that would help nurses with certification renewal.

On being selected for this award, Desrochers remarked, “It is an honor to be CPON® of the Year. I am proud to be part of a network of nurses that work every day for the well-being of children with cancer and an organization that supports the nurses who care for these children professionally and emotionally.”

She and her husband Paul have four adult children and two small grandchildren. In her free time, she enjoys reading and outdoor athletic activities such as running, skiing and biking.



Board Approves Budget and More at Fall Meeting

Diane Otte, RN, MSN, OCN®

The ONCC Board of Directors met in Pittsburgh last October. Here’s a glimpse of their meeting highlights.

The Board approved a 2016 budget that ensures ONCC may provide certification services in a financially responsible manner, while keeping certification fees as low as possible for nurses.

The Board reviewed the progress of the transition to new test and assessment vendors for 2016. Plans were well underway for a smooth changeover to Prometric for test administration and to Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) for the assessment.

During the meeting, the Board ap-

proved plans to celebrate the 30th anniversary of certification testing in 2016. Special events are planned for the ONS Congress, including a Walk through History, recognition of nurses who have maintained continuous certification since 1986, a photo collage of certified nurses, and more. Celebratory events will be held at the APHON Annual Conference as well.

Special activities throughout 2016 will include social media postings from certified nurses related to points of interest from the past 30 years, an anniversary video, stories about certified nurses, and anniversary themed promotions.

Certified Nurses: There’s Strength in Numbers

If you’re certified, you’re in good company—more than 35,000 of your peers are certified, too.

The number of oncology certified nurses can change on a daily basis because of the availability of testing nearly year-round. Here’s a quick look at the number of nurses who are ONCC-certified as of March 1, 2016.

Credential	Number Certified
OCN®	29,816
CPHON®	1,776
AOCNP®	1,266
AOCNS®	418
CBCN®	836
BMTCN™	805
AOCN®	764
CPON®	1,069

\*Note: nurses may hold more than one credential

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ONCC Mission Statement

The mission of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation is to promote excellence in patient care and professional practice by validating specialized knowledge in oncology nursing and related specialties.

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