

Introduction

This pamphlet provides oncology certified nurses with suggestions for using their credentials to enhance their careers, facilitate personal development, and gain recognition. Nurses who have been certified by the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) have found their credential to be beneficial in a variety of ways.

Whether you are certified at the basic level, advanced level, or in pediatric or breast care, use this information to enhance your personal and professional development through certification.

The Importance of Certification

Certification in oncology nursing demonstrates a nurse has specialized knowledge and experience. Certification is the objective, measurable way to ensure a professional nurse has the knowledge to practice competently within the specialty of oncology nursing. ONCC offers several certifications in oncology nursing:

- **OCN®** – Oncology Certified Nurse. The basic level of certification focusing on adult care.
- **CPON®** – Certified Pediatric Oncology Nurse. The basic certification focusing on pediatric care.
- **AOCN®** – Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse. An advanced level of certification focusing on adult care.
- **AOCNP®** – Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner. The advanced level, role specific certification for oncology nurse practitioners.
- **AOCNS®** – Advanced Oncology Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist. Advanced level certification for the oncology clinical nurse specialist.
- **CBCN** – Certified Breast Care Nurse. Certification for nurses practicing anywhere along the continuum of breast care nursing.

Gain Recognition

For many certified nurses, recognition of their credential is a first step toward greater job satisfaction and career enhancement. Whatever your goals may be, consider the ways you can obtain recognition among your colleagues, patients, employer, or potential employer.

Wear Your Credential

- Include your credentials on your name badge, if permitted.
- Wear a credential pin.
- Display your certificate in your unit or office.
- Suggest your employer display a plaque with the names of certified nurses (*ONCC offers a free recognition plaque to patient care settings where a majority of nurses are ONCC-certified*).
- Ask that your credentials be included wherever your name is used professionally.

Use Your Credential

- Include your credential every time you sign your name in a professional capacity.
- Print your credential on your business card, resume, and other professional materials.

Showcase Your Credential

- Tell your supervisor you are certified.
- Give your employer a copy of your certificate for your personnel file.
- Give your employer's public relations department the press release announcing your certification. Ask them to send it to local newspapers or send it yourself.
- Tell colleagues in your local Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) or Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON) chapter that you've become certified. Many chapters recognize members' achievements through newsletters, websites, and at chapter meetings.

Develop Professionally

Pursuing certification requires time and effort, and demonstrates a commitment to yourself and your patients. Attaining certification validates that you have met rigorous requirements for experience and knowledge in oncology nursing.

Capitalize on Opportunities for Professional Development

- Develop a brief explanation of certification that can be offered to patients and families. Share it with your facility and encourage other certified nurses to use it when introducing themselves to patients and families.
- Volunteer to develop or revise nursing care guidelines or patient education materials.
- Share information you learned while preparing for the certification test, either formally or informally.
- Offer to develop or teach in-service programs. Your status as a certified nurse offers credibility because your oncology knowledge has been validated.
- Volunteer to serve on committees within your institution, or to help establish new committees that may be needed.
- Encourage certification among your peers. Arrange a study group or teach a portion of a review course.
- Volunteer to speak to ONS or APHON chapters, other nursing organizations, or potential test candidates about the value of certification in oncology nursing.
- Network with other certified nurses. Participate in ONS or APHON chapter activities to meet other certified nurses in your community. Attend the ONCC Recognition Breakfast for Oncology Certified Nurses to make contacts at the national level.
- Pursue leadership positions in professional organizations. Keep your employer informed about your activities and how the skills you develop will benefit your institution.

Enhance Your Career

Certification can provide many opportunities to enhance your career. For example, some institutions offer financial rewards for certification, such as pay increases, bonuses, or tuition reimbursement. At other facilities, certified nurses are eligible for promotions or preferred work schedules. For some certified nurses, their credential provides opportunities for teaching, precepting, or consulting roles.

In addition, many institutions require certification in order to progress to advanced levels on the clinical ladder. In some states, advanced certification is required for licensure as an advanced practice nurse.

With the many opportunities available in nursing, certification can give you an edge in achieving a variety of career goals.

- Discuss certification with your employer or potential employer, and try to negotiate for support of certification in your benefit package.
- Review your personnel file periodically to ensure copies of educational materials you've developed are included in your file.
- Document instances when certification has had an impact on the care you've provided, a decision you've made, or leadership you've offered and share it with your employer.
- Create a portfolio of your accomplishments to share with your employer or potential employer.
- Update your resume or curriculum vitae to reflect your certified nurse status.

About ONCC

The Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) is a non-profit organization that was incorporated in 1984. The mission of ONCC is to promote and provide oncology nursing certification for the enhancement of patient care and professional practice. ONCC certifications are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), an independent organization that has established standards for national certification programs, and by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), the peer review and accreditation board for specialty nursing certification.

Certification granted by ONCC is according to a voluntary procedure intended solely to test for special knowledge. ONCC does not purport to define qualifications of any person for nursing practice. The significance of certification in any jurisdiction or institution is the responsibility of the candidate to determine, who should contact the appropriate state board of nursing or institution.



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Making Your Credential Work for You

A Guide
for
Oncology Certified Nurses

