**Explain Your Certification with Elevator Speech**

You’ve likely heard of the “elevator speech” – a term used to describe a brief speech that explains a product, service, or project. The name comes from the notion that the speech should be delivered in the time period of an elevator ride, usually 20-60 seconds. But you may not have thought about using this concept to explain your certification. Now you can.

ONCC has created an elevator speech certified nurses can use to explain what certification means in very simple terms. “I’m a certified oncology nurse. That means I have the specialized knowledge to competently care for patients with cancer. I stay up to date by completing continuing education programs that help me maintain my certification. I’m certified because I want to provide you with the best possible care.”

The elevator speech is a great way to introduce yourself to patients. Start with “Hello, my name is ________, and I’m a certified oncology nurse.” Let the script guide you rather than follow it word for word. Modify it to make it your own so you can speak comfortably about your certification with your patients, families, and healthcare colleagues.

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**Behind the Scenes Part 2: What’s Involved in Item Writing?**

Lisa Bjorkelo, MSN, RN, CPON®, BMTCN®, CNE, CPN

In the last issue we took a look behind the scenes at role delineation studies and test blueprint development. In this issue we will learn more about how certification examination items are developed.

As we prepare to be nurses, we take many tests to evaluate our learning, culminating in the NCLEX examination. After we are licensed, we may become certified in our specialty area by taking a certification exam. Most of us have wondered at some point, “Who writes these questions?” Well, most often it is certified nurses just like us, with tested oncology knowledge, experience in the specialty, and a willingness to serve as item writers. Erica Bauer BSN, RN, BMTCN® and Caroline Costello MBA, BSN, RN, CPON®, BMTCN® are two examples of nurses who answered the call for volunteer item writers.

Erica has worked with hematology stem cell transplant patients since 2009 at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center in Cleveland, Ohio. She has been a staff nurse, a transplant coordinator and most recently an inpatient assistant head nurse of the Malignant Hematology/Stem Cell Transplant division.

Caroline has been a pediatric hematology stem cell transplant nurse for 33 years. She spent six years at Duke University Medical Center, and the past twenty years at Boston Children’s Hospital where she is the Nurse Educator on the hematology stem cell transplant unit. Caroline became a BMTCN® with the inaugural exam in 2014, and in 2016 was named the BMTCN® of the Year.

Both Erica and Caroline responded to an ONCC email calling for BMTCN® item writers and were two of twelve nurses selected for the 2018 workshop. Caroline had been part of the role de-

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Award-Winning St. Francis Puts Heart in Cancer Care

Six years ago, St Francis Hospital, a nationally recognized heart center in East Hills, New York, opened a cancer institute. Just three years later, their state of the art Infusion Center achieved an astounding 100% oncology certification rate. Today, 18 registered nurses staff the Infusion Center, and all are oncology certified. These nurses embody the Cancer Institute’s mission: “Putting Our Hearts into Cancer Care”.

St. Francis Hospital Infusion Center was honored by ONCC as the recipient of the 2018 Employer Recognition Award (among organizations with less than 25 Registered Nurses) to recognize their sustained support of certification in oncology nursing.

“This award reflects what nurses at St. Francis experience every day. Our Infusion Center is a great place to practice our profession, to promote certification in oncology nursing, and to inspire the next generation of nurses to continue our commitment to excellence in patient care,” says Eileen Dwyer, RN, OCN®, Nurse Manager at the facility.

Hospital leaders understand the importance of specialty certification in the professional development of nurses. Certification is an expectation that is communicated beginning with the recruitment process. The leadership team provides ongoing encouragement and support to help nurses become certified. Nurses are reimbursed for test fees upon passing the exam, given an annual stipend to cover courses for recertification, and provided with on-site education and 15 hours of paid education time each year.

St. Francis Hospital acknowledges certified nurses with special awards, a recognition wall in the hospital lobby that features a plaque for each certified nurse, newsletter articles, and an ONCC employer recognition plaque in the Infusion Center waiting room. Certified nurses are given funding to attend national conferences, encouraged to submit abstracts for presentation at these events, and urged to participate in professional societies at the national and local level. The Center also strongly supports nurse’s involvement in community-based fundraising events related to cancer care.

Congratulations to these dedicated nurses!

Carissina Laudati Named OCN® of the Year

Carissa (Cara) Laudati is a Clinical Nurse IV in the infusion center at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center at their Basking Ridge, New Jersey site and has been named the 2018 Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®) of the Year! This was not surprising to any of her colleagues who exalt Cara’s accomplishments and talents without any prompting.

Dr. Paul Hamlin, the Chief of Medical Oncology at the Basking Ridge site shared, “She exudes the qualities of empathy, professionalism and intellect that serve as a model for all of her colleagues.” This sentiment is echoed by her patients and staff nurses who work with her daily. Her colleague Caroline Clark, BSN, RN, OCN® said, “As a leader on our unit, Cara models professionalism and dedication to patients undergoing cancer care....She recognizes the value of certification for our patients and the nursing profession. We are fortunate to have her motivating our team. We are so proud of her accomplishment!”

Cara has worked her way up from a junior staff nurse to the charge nurse of the busy 27 chair unit. In addition to helping facilitate the daily flow of the unit, she oversees the orientation of new unit staff and follows their personal and professional development after orientation. During her routine check-ins with them every few months Cara discusses the clinical ladder and preparation to become certified. She continued on page 6
The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, widely known as ‘The James,’ has a long history of supporting certification of oncology nurses. As the 2018 ONCC Employer Recognition Award Winner (among facilities with 25 or more RNs), The James has shown sustained support for all levels of certification. Colleen O’Leary MSN, RN AOCNS® and Christine Krall MSN, RN, OCN® nominated The James noting that their employer both prefers and supports oncology certification.

According to O’Leary, The James provides staff with financial incentives for certification and a free OCN® review course. In 2017 they began offering the ONCC FreeTake program, which allows their nurses to apply for the test without paying the fee, and for a free retest if they aren’t successful on the first attempt. Since implementing the program, all staff who’ve taken advantage of the program have passed the test on their first try!

Certification is also tied to the Clinical Ladder Program as a way for staff to demonstrate clinical excellence. The James leaders’ believe their role as an organization is to motivate nurses to have pride in their profession by seeking and retaining certification. This is reflected in the 68% of eligible nurses at The James holding oncology certification.

To celebrate their successes, The James hosts a yearly event for all certified nurses via the Development and Recognition Council. In 2017, hand delivered thank you notes accompanied a badge holder noting “I’m certified, what’s your superpower?”

O’Leary shared that her nomination of The James was a way to bring certification recognition full circle. In 2008, O’Leary accepted the award for OCN® of the Year “on behalf of all certified nurses” at her organization. She appreciates how winning the ONCC Employer Recognition Award will now showcase the accomplishments of all oncology certified nurses at The James.

Employers Earn Recognition for Staffing with Certified Nurses

Thirteen institutions were recently presented with ONCC Employer Recognition Plaques for staffing their facilities with oncology certified nurses. These free plaques are available to patient care settings where more than 50% of Registered Nurses are certified by ONCC.

Request your plaque at www.oncc.org/employer-recognitionplaque-order-form.

Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Radiation Oncology in Minneapolis, MN
Baylor Scott & White-Hillcrest in Dallas, TX
Baylor Scott & White-Round Rock in Dallas, TX
Boston Children’s Hospital, Hematology/Oncology/Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant/Research Unit in Boston, MA
Houston Cancer Institute, Chemo Infusion in Houston, TX
Inspira Health Network, Cancer Services in Vineland, NJ
Lakeview Hospital, Oncology & Infusion in Stillwater, MN
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Breast Center Nursing in New York, NY
NYU Langone Medical Center, Stephen D. Hassenfeld Children’s Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders in New York, NY
Sue Ann Wortman Cancer Center in Greenfield, IN
Tennessee Oncology, MP Clinic in Chattanooga, TN
Texas Oncology-Abilene in Texas
Yale New Haven Health, Smilow Cancer Center in North Haven, CT
Debra Seleen MSN, RN, AGCNS-BC, OCN®, BMTCN®, a Clinical Nurse Specialist at Gateway Medical Center in Gilbert, Arizona has been selected as the Blood and Marrow Stem Cell Transplant Certified Nurse (BMTCN®) of the Year for 2018. Seleen has been a RN for 40 years and a BMT nurse for 23. She started in BMT nursing at Banner Good Samaritan Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. She has been an Oncology Certified Nurse since 1996 and a BMTCN® since 2016.

Seleen supports OCN® and BMTCN® certification with goals to increase the number of certified nurses in her institution, promote patient safety and improve patient outcomes. To achieve these goals, she provides study resources to nurses who are getting ready for the exam, teaches stem cell transplant courses and has partnered with an oncology CNS and educator from outside the Banner System who came to her facility and provided an OCN® certification review course free of charge to staff. Seleen believes that certification should be accessible to everyone and worked with hospital administration to obtain reimbursement for certification review courses.

As the Clinical Nurse Specialist for the Stem Cell Transplant and Oncology Units, Seleen is integral in educating, mentoring and supporting the stem cell transplant nursing staff. She is also a resource for other hospital departments regarding the transplant process.

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Susan Kane, BSN, RN, CBCN® has always had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Over the course of her 44-year nursing career, she made it her standard practice to prepare for certification, no matter the specialty. “It’s about the personal growth that happens as you prepare for the exam, not the certification itself,” she explained. “Certification is emblematic of your knowledge, a kind of short hand to patients and providers that you really know your stuff.”

And Susan really knows her stuff.

As the staff educator and primary preceptor for all new staff on the oncology unit at Duke University Medical Center, Susan works hard to ensure she stays up-to-date on the latest treatments, pharmaceuticals and breast cancer best practices so that she can educate not only her staff, but her patients as well. Jeremy Force, DO and Medical Instructor of Breast Oncology at Duke Cancer Institute, praised Susan’s dedication to learning and teaching. “She is basically an attending physician focused on breast cancer at this point. (She) has a superior knowledge base in all aspects of nursing care, but especially in oncology nursing.”

P. Kelly Marcom, MD, Director of the Breast Cancer Program at Duke Cancer Institute echoed that sentiment. “She is tireless. She is uncomplaining. She is the linchpin for providing education on breast related issues to all the nurses at Duke Cancer Institute. Her effectiveness as a teacher derives from her innate enthusiasm for learning. This enthusiasm is contagious and inspires her colleagues to learn as well.”

Susan transitioned to oncology in 2009 and began focusing on breast pa-

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Mary Allen Selected 2018 AOCNS® of the Year

Mohamad Younes, RN, BScN, CPHON®, and Erica Fischer-Cartlidge DNP, CNS, CBCN®, AOCNS®

Item writer for the AOCNS® certification exam and Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Course post-test; pilot reviewer for ONS education courses; creative oncology educator; an ambassador for oncology certification; a dynamic advocate for evidence-based practice; BLS instructor – these are just some of the many ways to describe Mary Allen MSN, RN-BC, AOCNS®, ACNS-BC, the 2018 AOCNS® of the Year.

With more than 21 years in oncology nursing, Mary Allen is an Oncology and Pain Management Clinical Nurse Specialist responsible for quality, safety and the patient experience at Indiana University Health Bloomington Hospital. In this role she sits on numerous practice committees and looks for every opportunity to increase the education and clinical competence of those around her. She developed basic and advanced oncology classes for nurses in her organization and also teaches regional oncology review courses.

As if this wasn’t enough to keep her hands full, Allen is the President of the Central Indiana Chapter of ONS, an adjunct faculty member at Indiana University, a volunteer on the ONCC CNS/NP Role delineation task force, and a grant reviewer for Sigma Theta Tau. She demonstrates an unwavering commitment to the practice of nursing and its impact on the population it serves. Her passion is evident to patients and colleagues alike.

A strong believer in lifelong learning, her passion for certification is obvious in her promotion of certification. Allen was a driving force in bringing the ONCC FreeTake Program to Indiana University Health Bloomington Hospital which led to 100% of nurses in the service line applying to take their certification exam, with most taking it before the end of 2017. She didn’t just stop there – she also ensures staff have access to free books, study guides, OCN® review courses, and study groups. She acknowledges those who pass the test with banners and special “Certified Nurse” recognition on their ID badge. Allen does this all year long, but on Certified Nurses Day she takes it up a notch, bringing in ONCC ‘swag’ to promote certification, displaying banners, and having food to recognize the certified nurses. This special recognition is repeated during Nurses Week with a ceremony where they receive a special gift.

Allen shares that she first became certified as an OCN® 18 months after becoming a nurse. This enabled her to become a charge nurse for the unit and eventually move to the outpatient setting. The impact that becoming certified had on her career led her to again pursue certification after becoming a CNS. She shared that her certifications, “acknowledge the skills, experience, and education that I have obtained and excelled in over the years”.

Congratulations to Mary Allen on the 2018 AOCNS® of the Year Award. Her passion and dedication to improving the patient experience is truly inspiring.

Susan Kane, CBCN® continued from page 4

I talk about the importance of certification,” she said. “It’s not necessarily the certification, rather the preparation for certification, understanding the breadth and depth of breast cancer knowledge, that makes someone a good breast care nurse.”

Her passion for oncology and specifically breast cancer came naturally for Susan. “Breast cancer care is really rewarding. Partly because it has its own challenges with body image and sexual function related to surgical and medical treatments, but also because progress in the care of breast cancer has improved so much over the course of the years and continues to go into exciting new areas of targeted therapies, radiation and surgical techniques. It’s an amazing field with amazing patients.”
Deb Seleen, BMTCN® of Year continued from page 4

In her role, she interfaces with the multidisciplinary staff members who care for the transplant population such as the outpatient, emergency department, and interventional radiology staff. She has developed Standard Operating Procedures related to the Stem Cell Transplant (SCT) program and guides evidence-based practice changes to improve outcomes in the SCT population. She also was a key player in attainment of accreditation by the Foundation for Accreditation of Celluar Therapies (FACT) at her institution. Seleen has shared her SCT nursing expertise at the MD Anderson Global Academics Program (GAP) in Houston, Texas and at the 9th Annual Research Festival in Scottsdale, Arizona.

As the BMTCN® of the Year 2018, Seleen demonstrates commitment to service. She is the 2018-2019 secretary for the East Valley Oncology Nursing Society and is active in community service and fundraising. She participates in fundraising activities such as the Making Strides Break Cancer Walk and the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society’s “Light in the Night” walk. She is also a member of the planning committee of the Arizona CNS Association and has done legislative committee work for the Arizona Consensus Coalition Clinical Nurse Specialist Sunrise Bill.

When asked about winning this award, Seleen stated, “Receiving the 2018 BMTCN® of the Year award is an incredible honor. This award represents over 20 years of work in oncology and stem cell transplant and the significant experiences and mentors that have molded me into the nurse I am today. It is now my privilege to mentor others, sharing these experiences and knowledge to grow the specialty of Blood and Marrow Transplantation.”

Congratulations to Debra Seleen, 2018 BMTCN® of the Year!

Carissa Laudati, OCN® of the Year continued from page 2

facilitates staff access to review materials and looks for opportunities in the schedule to give staff quiet time away from the unit to study whenever possible. As the charge nurse she is able to balance the unit and patient scheduling needs with the professional needs of the staff to ensure both are equally important.

As an avid participant in the Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Nursing Practice Council, Cara is dedicated to improving practice. She is involved in developing chemotherapy policies and has led a number of initiatives, including a quality improvement project to reduce hemolysis rates on the unit. Perhaps most impressive is Cara’s work on a retrospective review that examined hypersensitivity reactions in patients receiving Rituximab when IV tubing was primed with drug versus saline. This sentinel work established it was safer for patients to have their IV tubing primed with the drug, and led to organizational practice changes, a publication and a national educational presentation.

Cara has learned and grown through these experiences and believes in passing it forward. She mentors her colleagues in project development, writing their first abstracts for ONS Congress, and has recently become a publication mentor. Clark said, “Her spirit of clinical inquiry led to practice changes and is evident in day to day problem solving and managing complexities of care. Cara’s skills, knowledge base, and team approach serve as a positive example to us all.”

One would never know that Cara was novice to oncology when she joined MSK in 2002. An experienced Cardio/Thoracic nurse, Cara was determined to break into oncology. So determined that she interviewed 8 times before she got the job! Cara shared that she wanted to prove to herself, and those who took a chance on hiring her, that she could become the type of expert in oncology that she had been in cardio/thoracic nursing. To do this she dedicated herself to learning the diseases and treatments, studying, and pursuing certification. She shared that after becoming certified she felt, “I had declared myself and that oncology was my specialty. I had found my niche... and certification helped me embrace the field and vest myself in it.”

When her manager, Michelle Kranz, was asked about Cara she enthusiastically shared, “Cara is a true example of nursing excellence and exemplifies leadership in oncology nursing practice. She is committed to evidence-based practice in the oncology setting and to the professional development of her colleagues. Cara is a natural leader who continues to inspire and motivate all of us. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award. I am honored to have her as part of the MSK nursing team.”

I think we’d all agree we are lucky to have a nurse like Cara as our colleague in oncology nursing. Congratulations, Cara!
lineation study and was encouraged to consider being an item writer. Erica was inspired to volunteer so she could learn more about the certification process which ultimately helps nurses who care for patients undergoing transplants.

Neither Erica nor Caroline had previous test item writing experience, but this was not a disadvantage. Each new participant is matched one-to-one with a mentor to guide them through the process. Prior to the workshop, participants are given preparatory material to preview, including articles and PowerPoint slides about writing test items. Best practices in item writing and sample questions were reviewed on the first evening of the workshop before the group members began to create their own items.

Each participant was tasked with writing 25 items based on the content areas of the BMTCN® test content outline (Test Blueprint), using a computer-based format. Item “stems” and answer options, rationales, notes and references were entered into the computer. Items were then reviewed by the mentor, who offered feedback or suggested revisions. Erica noted that item writers were free to draw question ideas from their own practice and experience. Caroline noted that in addition to her assigned mentor, she was able to bounce ideas off another mentor/mentee group in the same workroom and that there was a lot of collaboration throughout the process.

Logistically, the item writing workshop was held over one weekend. Although the participants volunteer their time, all expenses are paid by ONCC. When the event is over, there may be some work to finish at home such as writing or editing of your assigned question quota but both volunteers found the workload manageable.

About the experience, Caroline states she found it to be an overall good experience and a combination of hard work, fun and networking with other transplant nurses. Erica reports that she found the experience to be “extraordinary, in that I was able to gain more information about the specialty, network with nurses from various institutions across the country, and support an organization that validates my knowledge.”

Many thanks to all the members of this years’ workgroup as well as to those who have served in the past and who will volunteer in the future.

New Dashboard on ONCC.org

If you haven’t been to the ONCC website (www.oncc.org) recently you should visit the site and log in to your account. ONCC recently upgraded some site features to coincide with migration to a new database system.

A new My Account certification dashboard is among the features you’ll see when you log in to the site. The dashboard provides quick links to the things you most likely want to do on the ONCC website- apply for a certification test or renewal, enter renewal points on LearningBuilder, or access a Practice Test. The dashboard also lists your current certification credentials and the expiration date for each, so you can see at a glance what year renewal is due.

See for yourself at www.oncc.org. On your first visit to the site, you may be prompted to update your password. Note that the same password is used for oncc.org and the ONS website (www.oncs.org).

ONCC Certified Nurses
as of November 1, 2018

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ONCC Mission Statement
The mission of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation is to promote health and safety by validating competence and ensuring lifelong learning in oncology nursing and related specialties.

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