Mark Your Calendar With 2007 Test Dates, Deadlines

For those interested in taking the OCN® or CPON® certification examination, you can apply to take a computer-based test in April, July, or October 2007. Paper-and-pencil versions of the OCN® and CPON® test will be offered on April 23, 2007, in Las Vegas, NV (in conjunction with the Oncology Nursing Society 32nd Annual Congress), and at international test sites outside North America only.

Please note: That will be the only opportunity for paper-and-pencil based testing in 2007. All other examinations will be computer based and administered at computer-based testing centers.

AOCNP and AOCNS certification candidates will benefit from year-round availability of computerized testing. Candidates may apply at any time and, if eligible to test, will receive an authorization to test that provides for a 90-day testing period. (See “Advanced Testing Becomes More Convenient” on page 4 for more information.) Paper-and-pencil AOCNP and AOCNS tests will be offered on April 23, 2007, in Las Vegas, NV, and at specially arranged international test sites outside North America.

Grateful Patient Donates $10,000 for Certification

Mark Flitcraft, RN, BSN, OCN®

Who could have predicted that a newly forged relationship between an oncology nurse and her patient would lead to a donation to support certification? Meet the oncology certified nurse whose passion for certification prompted a patient to do just that.

Marcelle Kaplan, RN, MS, OCN®, AOCN®, has been a proud supporter of oncology nursing certification for years. Having served as ONCC president from 1998–1999, Kaplan currently works as the breast oncology clinical nurse specialist at New York–Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, NY.

The donor is a female patient of Kaplan’s who was diagnosed with breast cancer and also was found to have multiple myeloma during her disease workup. Her course of treatment included surgery for the breast cancer and an autologous stem cell transplant for the multiple myeloma. A former social worker, the patient became familiar with the oncology nurses who cared for her and developed a special connection with Kaplan. Kaplan makes a point to inform patients and families that she is a certified oncology nurse, thus stressing the value of her credentials.

During the course of treatment, the patient spoke of her desire to give back to the cancer program that had helped her and asked Kaplan for advice. Kaplan agreed that a donation to the center would be appreciated and suggested that the woman also consider recognizing the care and expertise of the certified oncology nurses whom she had come to know during treatment by supporting oncology nursing certification activities at the hospital. The patient made a generous donation to the Weill Cornell Breast Center and, shortly afterward, called Kaplan and said she was ready to donate

[See “Donation,” page 3]
**Editor’s Message**

**Inspire Others About Your Certification**

Heather Thompson Mackey, RN, MSN, APRN, BC, AOCN®

What do you value most about your oncology nursing certification? How do you respond to physicians, other nurses, and patients when they ask, “What does oncology certification mean?” This issue of ONCC News shares the story of one nurse and her patient’s experience with care delivered by oncology certified nurses. As you reflect on your own experiences, I encourage you to share them with ONCC News via the Readers Respond question (see page 7). Perhaps they will serve as inspiration to others in their own practice.

On behalf of the ONCC News Editorial Board, I would like to welcome Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®, to the Editorial Board. Michael works as a staff nurse on a medical hematology and oncology floor at Huntsville Hospital in Alabama and was the first staff nurse on his unit to achieve oncology certification. Thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to oncology nursing certification, Michael! Thanks, too, to our immediate past editor, Susan Newton, RN, MS, AOCN®, AOCNS, for her years of dedication to the publication of ONCC News and contributions to the field of oncology nursing, particularly certification.

The ONCC News Editorial Board, along with the ONCC Board of Directors, is committed to ensuring that each reader finds the ONCC News to be a timely, informative, and valuable means of communication. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Board at oncc@ons.org. Thanks to each of you for all that you do to promote oncology nursing certification and the delivery of high-quality nursing care.

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**Board Tackles Timely Issues**

Lori Nicholson, MS, MA
Public member, ONCC Board of Directors

The nine-member ONCC Board of Directors held its fall meeting October 13–15, 2006, at the ONCC National Office in Pittsburgh, PA. The meeting’s principal task was to approve the upcoming year’s budget, but the Board addressed many other topics, trends, and initiatives.

The Board is pleased to announce that the number of Roberta Scofield Awards will increase from 50 to 75 in 2008. The Board recognizes that many certified and not-yet-certified oncology nurses may not receive financial support for certification from their employers, and this is one way ONCC can directly assist nurses committed to certification. For information about how to apply for a 2008 Roberta Scofield Award, visit www.oncc.org/awards/scofield.shtml.

The popular Certification Oasis will return to the Oncology Nursing Society Congress in April 2007 in Las Vegas, NV. There, oncology certified nurses will be able to relax, refresh, and re-energize for their busy Congress activities. Also at Congress, ONCC will host a forum where oncology nursing certification advocates—now numbering more than 500 in 45 states—will be able to convene and share experiences. If you are an advocate, watch for more information about the new event at Congress.

Subspecialty certification continues to demand the attention of the Board. Subspecialty knowledge and competency can be recognized in many ways. At its October meeting, the Board authorized funding for logical job analyses (LJAs) to be performed for three subspecialty areas: breast care, radiation therapy, and blood and marrow stem cell transplantation. The results from the LJAs will help frame the Board’s next step on the complex issue.

Every five years, the nursing role upon which each certification test is based must be re-evaluated. In 2007, a fresh OCN® role delineation study is necessary, and the Board approved funding for completion of the study.

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) recently announced results from a new survey on the value of certification. The ONCC Board reviewed the results, which confirm the perceived value of certification. Twenty of ABNS’s member organizations, including ONCC, participated. More than 11,000 nurses representing 36 certification credentials responded to the survey.


Finally, two seats on the ONCC Board are up for election. The online voting window is open until December 15, 2006. The Board encourages all oncology certified nurses to vote. For more information, please see “Meet the Candidates,” page 3.

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**Share Your Opinion of ONCC News**

What do you like about ONCC News? What would you change if you could? An upcoming ONCC News reader survey will give you a chance to share your valuable opinions.

The ONCC News Editorial Board will conduct the survey to obtain feedback on what readers would like to see in ONCC News. The survey will be conducted online and will take just a few minutes to complete. Readers will be invited to share their opinions on various features, as well as the new electronic format.

The results of the survey will be used to develop content for future issues and to ensure that the newsletter meets the needs of its readers.

As you read this issue, get ready to share your opinions. Then watch your e-mail for an invitation to participate in the survey.
Meet the Candidates for ONCC Board of Directors

Voting has begun for two positions on the ONCC Board of Directors. If you haven’t cast your vote, learn about the candidates on the ballot. Three nurses have been slated for a position to be filled by an OCN®, and two nurses have been slated for the position open to an AOCN®, AOCNP, or AOCNS certified nurse. Meet the candidates.

**Director—OCN® certified nurse**

Inga Aksamit, RN, MBA, OCN®, vice president of clinical services, National Oncology Alliance, San Rafael, CA

Leadership experience:
- Oncology Nursing Society, Bone Marrow Transplantation SIG, newsletter editor, 1997–1999
- National Oncology Alliance, American Society of Clinical Oncology Highlights Program, program leader, 2006
- Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, International Bone Marrow Transplantation Program Planning Committee, member, 1992–1993

Mary Blaney, RN, OCN®, director of operations, Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Center, Savannah, GA

Leadership experience:
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Georgia Chapter, president, 1999
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Georgia Chapter, Nominating Committee, chair, 2000–2002
- Memorial Health University Medical Center, Nursing Vision Committee, member, 2004

**Director—AOCN®, AOCNP, or AOCNS certified nurse**

Barbara Barnes Rogers, CRNP, MN, AOCN®, adult hematology-oncology nurse practitioner, Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia, PA

Leadership experience:
- Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, item writer, 2002
- Oncology Nursing Society, Board of Directors, member, 1999–2002
- Oncology Nursing Society, Advanced Practice Nurse Retreat Project Team, member, 2000

Julie Earle, RN, OCN®, radiation oncology nursing supervisor, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN

Leadership experience:
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Minnesota Chapter, president/president-elect/treasurer, 1998–2002
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Minnesota Chapter, Nominating Committee, chair, 2002–2005
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Minnesota Chapter, Membership Committee, chair, 1997–2001
- Mayo Clinic Cancer Conference and Review Course Planning Committee, member, 2002–2006
- Mayo Clinic Cancer Conference Oncology Review Course, presenter, 2005

Carol Brueggen, MS, APRN, BC, AOCNS, oncology clinical nurse specialist, St. Mary’s Hospital, Rochester, MN; assistant professor of nursing, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine

Leadership experience:
- Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, Recognition Subcommittee, member, 2006
- Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year, 2006
- Mayo Clinic, Cancer Conference and Oncology Review Course Planning Committee, member 2003, 2005–2007
- Oncology Nursing Society, Southeast Minnesota Chapter, president, 2005 and 2000

All voting will be completed online. Survey and Ballot Systems, an independent election administrator, sent an e-mail to certified nurses with a link to the online ballot. Certified nurses without e-mail addresses in the ONCC database were mailed a letter with instructions on how to access a ballot from any computer with Internet access. All ballots must be cast by 11:59 pm CST on December 15, 2006.

Donation (Continued from page 1)

$10,000, specifically to benefit oncology certified nurses!

A portion of the donation has been used to fund an on-site oncology nursing certification review course for more than 20 oncology nurses, and the facility plans to repeat the review course for additional nurses in the near future. A special thank-you to the patient, who recognized that certification makes a difference. Hats off to Kaplan for stepping forward and gently suggesting that contributing to the professional development of certified oncology nurses is a great way to express appreciation for the care they provide.
Advanced Testing Now More Convenient

Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®

Responding to the needs of nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists, ONCC has changed the test administration process for AOCNP and AOCNS candidates. Starting in 2007, applicants for the AOCNS and AOCNP tests will have the flexibility of year-round testing at computer-based testing facilities throughout North America. Previously, the tests were offered in 12-day windows on a quarterly basis.

The change results from feedback from nurses in states that require advanced practice certification prior to granting advanced practice nurse status and from nurses seeking employment as advanced practice nurses with employers that require certification. Although the fact that certification is required is commendable, timing is difficult. Previously, when tests were offered four times per year, several months could pass between the time a candidate became eligible to apply for a test and the next available testing opportunity. That was problematic for nurses working in states or for employers requiring advanced certification.

An application to take an AOCNP or AOCNS test may be submitted to ONCC as soon as a candidate has met all of the eligibility criteria for the test. If confirmed by ONCC as eligible to test, the applicant will receive an authorization to test within four weeks. The authorization will open a 90-day period for nurses working in states that require advanced practice certification or wondered about who writes the test items. The ONCC Test Development Committees are responsible for developing the examinations, and they fulfill their role in part by mentoring a group of volunteers known as item writers.

ONCC places calls at various times for certified nurses who are interested in writing test items for specific certification tests. Selected nurses attend an Item Writing Workshop in Pittsburgh, PA, where they are introduced to the process of creating test items. Members of the Advanced Practice Test Development Committee, the OCN® Test Development Committee, and the CPON® Test Development Committee serve as mentors for their respective item writers. During the workshop, attendees review each step in the process of creating a certification examination, a process that begins with the results of a role delineation study.

A role delineation study identifies the knowledge necessary for competent performance and paves the way for constructing an outline of the subject areas that must be included on a certification test. The outline, known as a test blueprint, is used to guide the development of test items. Specific topic areas from a test blueprint are assigned to each item writer, and the mentors lead the novice item writers through the process of creating appropriate multiple-choice test items by combing through the oncology references used by ONCC. During the workshop, attendees learn how to write items that measure knowledge and its application, how to use appropriate terminology, and how to follow ONCC sensitivity guidelines.

What do participants have to say about their experiences with item writing? Thelma Baker, RN, BSN, OCN®, said, “I wanted to become involved with ONCC, and I enjoy writing and reading.” She stressed nursing professionalism in specialty areas as a motivating factor for participating. “To continue to grow as a professional,” she said, “I realized that I needed to make the time and to become involved. I felt that this would be a great starting point to be part of the oncology team.”

Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®, an ONCC News Editorial Board member, also served as an item writer for the OCN® test. Smart was slightly uncertain when he first applied in May 2006. “I applied, but I really didn’t think I was going to be selected,” he said. Fifteen OCN®’s, including Smart, were selected to write test items. The most memorable part of the item-writing process? “I was very impressed by the rigorous process all items go through to become accepted items on the exam. . . . Reminds me a little bit of the School House Rock song ‘I Am a Bill.’” Smart was surprised at how difficult some of the items were to write.

Baker added, “A lot of time, thought, planning, and detail go into the making of an oncology certification test. Certified nurses commit time and effort to make the tests a true marker of knowledge and commitment to a profession that is truly great.”

Could item writing be a volunteer opportunity for you? Watch ONCC News for calls for test item writers in 2007.
Employer Spotlight

Employers Large and Small Support Certification

Mark Flitcraft, RN, BSN, OCN®

Employers large and small are proving that size doesn’t matter when encouraging certification of oncology nurses. Two organizations, one a major cancer center and one a physician-owned practice, have made the commitment to recognize the role of oncology certified nurses in providing cancer care.

Ohio State University James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute

Oncology nursing thrives at the Ohio State University James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute. U.S. News and World Report ranked the James Cancer Hospital, “the James,” in the top 25 cancer programs in the United States.

The James is the only freestanding oncology research and treatment center in the United States and is designated as a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute. Additionally, the James Cancer Hospital practices a shared governance model of nursing leadership and is in the process of seeking Magnet Recognition Program status from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

In such an environment, oncology nursing is expected to lead in the nursing field.

Jean Just, RN, BC, MSN, director, and Gail Havener, RN, MS, AOCN®, staff development specialist in the Department of Nursing, Staff Development, and Patient Education, related some of the many ways that the employer encourages oncology nursing certification.

• A comprehensive, hospital-based, 11-week review course designed to meet basic oncology certification review criteria, beginning in 2007
• National specialty certification differential (3.5% of base salary)
• Clinical ladder voluntary opportunity for self-promotion at level III (4% base salary increase) and level IV (6% base salary increase)

In 2007, the Ohio State University James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute will provide nurses with a comprehensive, hospital-based, 11-week review course for basic oncology nursing certification. Some of the employer’s proud certified nurses are pictured here.

Meridian Oncology Associates

Sybil Kamper, RN, BSN, OCN®, speaks from experience when she talks about the value that oncology certified nurses add to Meridian Oncology Associates in Mississippi; she has worked with one of the physician owners, John Clay, MD, for 28 years. Kamper, the clinic manager, said that a collaborative spirit in the busy clinic contributes to zero employee turnover among certified oncology nurses. Physician-nurse collegiality is present at the clinic; judgment of oncology certified nurses is sought by the physicians, who often ask, “What do you suggest for managing this symptom?”

All of the seven full-time oncology nurses are certified by ONCC. The clinic sees 100–120 patients daily. All of the RNs in the patient-care environment mix chemotherapy, infuse drugs, and teach patients.

Meridian Oncology Associates encourages its nurses to become certified by paying for the examination fees as well as providing a lending library of core curriculum and other review materials. Upon passing the examination, oncology certified nurses are paid a bonus and earn the opportunity to attend Oncology Nursing Society events such as the annual Congress or Institutes of Learning; Meridian Oncology Associates pays salary, travel fees, registration, and lodging.

ONCC salutes both of the organizations for recognizing the value and contribution of oncology certified nurses.
A New Batch of Employers Support Certification

Fifty-two institutions recently were recognized by ONCC for staffing their facilities with oncology certified nurses.

ONCC provides recognition plaques free to patient-care settings where the majority (more than 50%) of professional nurses is oncology certified.

To apply for a recognition plaque or to request a replacement certificate, visit www.oncc.org/awards/plaques.shtml.

23 Nurses Sign on as Advocates

More certified nurses have joined the Oncology Nursing Certification Advocates Program to promote the benefits of certification in their workplaces and communities. The newest advocate volunteers follow.

Lisa Aiello-Laws, North Cape May, NJ
Anna M. Bailey, Wooster, OH
Aprill Baker, Vero Beach, FL
Lisa Barbarotto, Hamden, CT
Luzviminda Bautista, Edgewater, NJ
Carol Brueggen, Rochester, MN
Carol Chell, Brookings, SD
Michael Fritz, Baton Rouge, LA
Lynda Lee Garafano, Burlington, VT
Anna Giallo-Urino, New York, NY
Sharon LaFever, Baltimore, MD
Deborah J. Lee, Houston, TX
Corina Nance, Temple, TX
Marilyn Omabegho, Somerset, NJ
Janet Parrish, Joliet, IL
Teresa Pischner, Mount Pleasant, SC
Kami Potter, Allentown, PA
Judith Strobel, Owensboro, KY
Laurie Studvent, Houston, TX
Angela Tuimmons, Liverpool, NY
Mary B. VanDerhule, Sioux Falls, SD
Tamela Williamson, Richmond, VA

Advocates are oncology certified nurses who volunteer to promote the benefits of certification in their workplaces, chapters, and communities.

Currently, more than 500 certified nurses participate in the program. For a complete list of advocates or an application to join the program, visit the ONCC Website at www.oncc.org/support/advocates Program.shtml.

Renewal Point Value Changes for Continuing Medical Education

One hour of continuing medical education (CME) soon will be worth one point toward certification renewal by the Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option (ONC-PRO). What’s behind the change?

Previously, a CME hour, which requires 60 minutes of instructional content, was worth 1.2 ONC-PRO points. A continuing nursing education (CNE) contact hour, which required 50 minutes of instructional content, was worth one ONC-PRO point.

(See “CME,” page 7)
**CME**

(Continued from page 6)

The extra value for a CME hour recognized the difference in the amount of instruction time provided in an hour of CME versus an hour of CNE.

However, beginning in 2007, the American Nurses Credentialing Center, one of the largest accrediting bodies for CNE, will require 60 minutes of instructional content for one CNE contact hour. In recognition of the change, which means that the amount of instruction will be the same in one hour of CNE as in one hour of CME, ONCC will award one ONC-PRO point for one contact hour of either CNE or CME. The new ONC-PRO point value for CME will begin in 2007.

Renewal candidates should record their CNE and CME points on separate ONC-PRO logs. Electronic logs are available on the ONCC Web site at www.oncc.org/oncpro.

A limit exists on the number of points that can be submitted in the CME category. A maximum of 50% (50 points for OCN® and CPON® renewal candidates, 62.5 for AOCN®, AOCNP, and AOCNS renewal candidates) may be CME.

If you have questions about certification renewal, visit the ONCC Web site at www.oncc.org/renewal or contact ONCC at 877-769-6622 (toll free).

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**Pediatric Nurses Group Changes Its Name**

The Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses (APON) is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a name change. APON now is the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON, pronounced APON).

According to APHON President Rita Secola, MS, RN, CPON®, “Our organization’s name change truly reflects and acknowledges the nurses and patients and families we serve.” Over the years, the group has increased its educational opportunities, publications, and initiatives on pediatric hematology, recognizing that a majority of its members routinely provide care for children with hematologic and oncologic disorders.

The name change will be accompanied by a new logo and redesigned Web site, both to be implemented during the coming months. Learn more at www.aphon.org.

When ONCC conducts the next role delineation study of pediatric oncology nursing practice in 2008, hematology will be included. Pending the study results, changes to the CPON® examination will be made. Candidates will be notified well in advance of any changes to the CPON® examination’s content.

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**Readers Respond**

**How Do You Explain the Benefits of Certification to Patients?**

How can certified nurses make the most of opportunities to discuss certification with patients and families?

Tell us what you think.

E-mail your response to oncc@ons.org, fax it to 412-859-6168, or mail it to ONCC News, 125 Enterprise Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1214.