2007 ONCC Award Winners Embody Excellence

Mark Flitcraft, RN, BSN, OCN®

Each year, ONCC receives many outstanding nominations for the Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®) and Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year Awards. This year was certainly no exception. The award recipients demonstrate the highest levels of excellence in oncology nursing and the promotion of certification.

The 2007 OCN® of the Year Award was presented to Kimberly George, RN, BSN, OCN®, oncology coordinator at United Regional Health System in Wichita Falls, TX. To promote oncology nursing certification at her institution, George conducts an oncology nursing review and provides individual mentoring and coaching for nurses preparing for an examination. She successfully lobbied her institution’s administration to send nurses to certification review courses, reimburse certification fees, and recognize certified nurses with plaques in their units. As a member of the Oncology Nursing Certification Advocates Program (ONCAP), George frequently speaks to fellow nurses about the merits of certification as well as to nursing students about the role of the oncology nurse and the benefits of certification.

George is committed to improving the quality of nursing care delivered to patients at United Regional Health System and beyond. Among other activities in her workplace, she created safe-handling protocols and standardized patient and family chemotherapy education by developing customized portfolios for each patient. With the assistance

[See “Awards,” page 4]

Deadlines Approaching for 2007 Certification Renewal

Is your certification due for renewal in 2007? If you are like most certified nurses, you may choose to renew by the Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option (ONC-PRO), regardless of how you have renewed your certification in the past. To renew by ONC-PRO, you must:

- Meet all eligibility criteria for renewal (see the ONCC Web site at www.oncc.org/renewal).
- Accrue the required ONC-PRO points.
- Submit your application and ONC-PRO logs. Submit by September 15, 2007, and you will save $75 off the fee; all applications and logs must be received by October 15, 2007, with the full fee, for 2007 renewal.

You are not required to accrue points in every ONC-PRO category.

For information on categories and point requirements, go to www.oncc.org/renewal/oncpro.shtml. If you have questions about whether an activity is eligible for ONC-PRO points, contact ONCC toll free at 877-769-6622 (412-859-6104).

Remember that certification cannot be renewed after its expiration. Nurses who do not submit their renewal applications and logs by the October 15 deadline will lose their certification when it expires on December 31, 2007, and will need to meet the eligibility criteria for initial candidates and pass the test to become certified in the future.

Applications for 2007 AOCNP® and AOCNS® Tests Are Now Due

Nurses who are planning to take the Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner (AOCNP®) or the Advanced Oncology Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist (AOCNS®) test in 2007 must submit their applications and required documentation by September 1.

Candidates whose applications are received by September 1 will have a 90-day testing window from October–December 2007.

Candidates whose applications are received after September 1 will not be able to take the AOCNP® or AOCNS® test until 2008. Because ONCC is changing testing companies beginning January 1, 2008, AOCNP® and AOCNS® candidates cannot have a testing window that includes dates in both 2007 and 2008.

Candidates can apply online or learn more about the AOCNP® and AOCNS® tests at www.oncc.org.

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**President's Message**

**Where We Are and Where We Are Going**

Carlton G. Brown, PhD, APRN, AOCN®

As I began writing my first “President's Message” for *ONCC News* just a few days into the term, I was immediately daunted by the task of serving as president of ONCC. As a former OCN® who now holds AOCN® certification, I often wonder whether I am qualified to represent more than 25,000 certified nurses. Like many of you, I am thankful for what oncology nursing certification has done for me personally and professionally over the years. In that time, I have met and worked with hundreds of nurses who are proud of the powerful credentials—OCN®, AOCN®, CPON®, AOCNP®, and AOCNS®—that they display on office walls and name badges. Although they are only letters, they represent years of hard work and a commitment to excellence in oncology nursing care. Because I truly believe in the value of certification, I would like to talk about where we are and where we need to go to preserve and promote oncology nursing certification.

This spring, three members of the ONCC Board of Directors completed six years of service. Patricia Baldwin, RN, MS, OCN® (immediate past president and an ONCC volunteer for more than 13 years), Julie Ponto, RN, MS, AOCN®, APRN-BC (past president), and Lori Nicholson, MS, MA (past public member, past treasurer, and past *ONCC News* liaison), have successfully led ONCC through many major decisions and turbulent waters. In addition, Ellyn E. Matthews, PhD, RN, CS, AOCN®, CRNI, completed two years of service as the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Board liaison to ONCC. These exceptional women have played an important role in the development of ONCC. Thank you for your contributions and years of hard work. You will be missed.

ONCC is stronger than ever before, embodying more than 25,000 oncology certified nurses, including 21,773 OCN®s, 1,421 CPON®s, 1,316 AOCN®s, 417 AOCNP®s, and 174 AOCNS®s. One major accomplishment is that ONCC recently obtained accreditation by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies for the AOCN® and AOCNP® certification programs. Now all five certifications have met the rigorous accreditation process, thereby strengthening the meaning behind the credentials. In addition, registration of the AOCNP® and AOCNS® certification marks has been finalized.

We all know the value of certification personally and professionally, but does certification make a difference in patient outcomes? The best way to answer this very important question is through research. Therefore, with assistance from the ONS Foundation, the ONCC Board recently allocated $60,000 to fund research that will examine the relationship between nurse-sensitive patient outcomes and oncology nursing certification.

The opportunity for scholarship and recognition has never been greater in ONCC. Recently, the ONCC Board increased the number of Roberta Scofield Memorial Certification Awards from 50 to 75 in 2008. The awards can be used to pay for initial certification or recertification fees. Information about the Scofield Awards can be found at www.oncc.org/awards/scofield.shtml. Next year, along with the Employer Recognition Award and OCN®, CPON®, and Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year Awards, ONCC will present the new Pearl Moore Certification Champion Award, which was created in honor of ONS’s former chief executive officer. The award will be given to a person or group who has demonstrated commitment to oncology nursing certification. More information on the Pearl Moore Certification Champion Award can be found at www.oncc.org/awards as well as in future issues of *ONCC News*.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges that the ONCC Board faces is the organization’s ongoing success. I am reminded of the old adage, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” When an organization runs as well as ONCC, why would we want to change anything? Yet the world is changing almost constantly for patients with cancer and the nurses who care for them. John F. Kennedy said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

With the future in mind, the ONCC Board is currently looking at two major initiatives to move certified oncology nurses forward. Our goal is to identify certification products and services that oncology nurses might need five years from now. First, ONCC will introduce subspecialty certification in breast care in 2009; similar certification in radiation, and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation is being considered. Although the ONCC Board has not decided the specifics of the programs, consideration of subspecialty certification certainly is warranted, so more will follow on this topic.

The second area of focus is the ever-changing world of advanced practice nursing. A particular challenge is the lack of consistency (or standardization) in the regulation of advanced practice nurses. To keep current in this arena, an ONCC Advanced Practice Task Force was created. It will meet to plan strategies to keep ONCC involved in any national decisions made about advanced practice nursing regulation. Continue to read *ONCC News* for additional information as the task force becomes organized.

Finally, numerous opportunities are available for individuals to become involved in ONCC at the national level. We are a volunteer organization, just like ONS. We have an incredible professional staff, led by ONCC Executive Director Cynthia Miller Murphy, RN, MSN, CAE, which performs the daily functions of the organization. But the contributions of volunteers who write test items, participate in test development, and volunteer to become board members are what make ONCC the leader in nursing certification. As the 13th president of ONCC, I am honored to represent you and look forward to working with you to lead this strong organization into the future.
Hartford Hospital Takes Top Honor for Employers

Camille Servodidio, RN, MPH, CRNO, OCN®, CCRP, Guest Contributor

Hartford Hospital in Connecticut received the 2007 ONCC Employer Recognition Award, presented at ONCC’s Recognition Breakfast for Oncology Certified Nurses, held in conjunction with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) 32nd Annual Congress in Las Vegas, NV.

Hartford Hospital has established certification as a strategic goal and supports nurses through all phases of the process. The hospital’s Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Program provides funding for review courses and examinations, as well as paid time off and travel expenses for nurses to attend continuing education programs and conferences. Hartford also rewards nurses who obtain certification through a pay-for-performance system, which results in higher merit increases for certified nurses.

To recognize nurses who obtain certification, Hartford pulls out all the stops. During Oncology Nurses Week in May 2006, Hartford held its second annual “mocktail” party, where the director of the cancer center presented each oncology certified nurse with a silver OCN® pin. Various other awards were presented to recognize nursing excellence. Throughout the year, certified oncology nurses were honored and recognized in hospital newsletters and New England nursing publications. One unit celebrated achieving 100% certification with a pizza party. In January 2007, the nursing leadership sponsored a party with cake and coffee to celebrate the three cancer program units that achieved 100% certification: hematology/oncology, cancer clinical research office, and radiation oncology. Past ONCC President Patricia Baldwin, RN, MS, OCN®, who resides in the Boston area, traveled to Hartford to present plaques and congratulate the units. Mary Jean Thielman, APRN, OCN®, president of the Central Connecticut Chapter of ONS, also recognized Hartford Hospital for honoring the three cancer program units that achieved 100% certification. A plaque listing all certified oncology nurses in the cancer program is displayed in the cancer center’s hallway.

The ONCC News Editorial Board congratulates Hartford Hospital and all of its nurses on a job well done!

Institutions Rewarded for Certified Nursing Staffs

ONCC recently awarded recognition plaques to 36 institutions where a majority (more than 50%) of the professional oncology nurses are ONCC certified. ONCC provides a plaque free of charge to any patient care setting that meets the requirement. To request a recognition plaque for your institution, visit www.oncc.org/awards/plaques.shtml. Congratulations to the following organizations.

Alliance Hematology/Oncology in Westminster, MD
Anna Jaques Hospital, Outpatient Oncology Clinic, in Newburyport, MA
Arena Oncology Associates in Lake Success, NY
Associates in Medical Oncology in Oaklawn, IL
Beachwood Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center in Ohio
Cancer Center, Hematology Oncology Division, in McMinnville, OR
Centegra Sage Cancer Center in McHenry, IL
Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center, Hematology/Oncology Outpatient Clinic, in Seattle, WA
Comprehensive Hematology Oncology Physicians in Dearborn, MI
Connecticut Multispecialty Group, Wethersfield Infusion Center
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Radiation Oncology, in Lebanon, NH
Duke University Health System, Radiation Oncology, Duke University Medical Center, in Durham, NC
Hahnemann University Hospital, Center for Gynecologic Oncology, in Philadelphia, PA
Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, Hematology/Oncology Unit, in Boston, MA
Henrico Doctor’s Hospital, Infusion Center–Parham Campus, in Richmond, VA
Henrico Doctor’s Hospital, Radiation Oncology–Forest Campus, in Richmond, VA
Hennico Doctor’s Hospital, Women’s Imaging Center, in Richmond, VA
Holy Cross Hospital, Infusion Center, in Silver Spring, MD
Holy Cross Hospital, Oncology Unit, in Silver Spring, MD
I. Brozsky Associates in Philadelphia, PA
Liberty Hospital, Oncology Clinic, in Missouri
M.D. Anderson Physicians Network in Houston, TX
Medical Center Clinic, PC, in McKees Rocks, PA
Mercy Health System, Hematology/Oncology Clinic, in Janesville, WI
Methodist Hospitals, Radiation Oncology, in Gary, IN
Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Center in Miami Beach, FL
National Cancer Institute, National Naval Medical Center, Medical Oncology, in Bethesda, MD
New York Oncology Hematology in Troy
North Shore Oncology Hematology Associates in McHenry, IL
Overlook Hospital, 3 A/B Oncology, in Summit, NJ
St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Ambulatory Infusion Center, in Bridgeport, CT
Stillwater Cancer Care Associates in Oklahoma
Trinitas Comprehensive Cancer Center, Infusion, in Elizabeth, NJ
Virginia Mason Medical Center, Oncology Infusion Center, in Seattle, WA
Vita Hematology-Oncology PC, Anna Niewiarowska, MD, in Bethlehem, PA
Washington Hospital Center, Cancer Institute, Oncology Infusion Center, in Washington, DC
of a former patient’s family, she created the Tres Hood Memorial Cancer Resource Center, which provides educational resources for patients, families, healthcare providers, and community members. George has an exemplary commitment to the community, as evidenced by her development of a culturally specific, bilingual education outreach program targeting Hispanic women and Latinas to teach them the importance of breast self-examination and mammography.

George is a founding member of the Cancer Coalition of North Texas, a facilitator for the Texas Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition, an American Cancer Society (ACS) volunteer legislative ambassador, and a member of her local ACS Board of Directors.

The 2007 Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year Award was presented to Michele Gaguski, MSN, RN, AOCN®, APN-C, an oncology clinical nurse specialist at Ocean Medical Center in Brick, NJ.

With her experience as an educator, Gaguski has developed and presented dozens of certification review courses throughout the United States. She works to promote certification at Ocean Medical Center by organizing study groups, implementing test preparatory sessions, and offering one-on-one coaching to potential test candidates.

At her institution, she developed and facilitates an annual oncology nursing retreat, created a multicourse oncology competency program, developed self-learning modules on pain management, and developed an oncology orientation program for outpatient oncology staff. She also provides oncology education to professional and paraprofessional members of the healthcare team. Gaguski serves on the Cancer Committee, the Patient and Family Education Committee, and the Hospice Level of Care Committee.

Gaguski is as an ACS volunteer legislative ambassador, a facilitator for the I Can Cope Program, and a speaker for Gilda’s Club. Her activities in community outreach and education, and in the oncology nursing community through training, testing, and nurse development, testify to the level of leadership and commitment that an advanced practice nurse brings.

Congratulations to both of these accomplished professionals!
The Oasis offered certified oncology nurses at Congress a chance to rest their feet, receive complimentary massages, get organized, and network with colleagues from around the world. Motivational speaker Nick Mezacapa addresses the ONCC Recognition Breakfast for Oncology Certified Nurses during the 32nd Annual Oncology Nursing Society Congress in Las Vegas, NV. He drew on his experiences as a teacher, coach, priest, husband, father, prostate cancer survivor, radio personality, and thespian to discuss survivorship and spirituality. A certified nurse takes a quiet moment at the ONCC Certification Oasis to review her Congress syllabus.
Reader Survey Reveals Your Thoughts on ONCC News

Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®

The ONCC News Reader Survey that was conducted recently is especially important because it follows the transition made approximately one year ago from a hard-copy newsletter to an online-only format. The goal of changing to an electronic format has been successful in that it provided significant cost savings by eliminating printing and postal expenses. However, what effect has the change had on readership? The survey provided readers with an opportunity to share feedback regarding the change as well as other aspects of the newsletter.

The invitation to participate in the electronic survey was sent via e-mail to 21,070 certified oncology nurses who receive e-mail from ONCC. Of those, 1,290 people visited the survey site and 1,053 completed the survey, for a response rate of 5%. Although this number is low, it is in line with other online survey completion rates in the Oncology Nursing Society.

The following are key points from respondents.

- 80% said that they received the previous issue of ONCC News, whereas 20% said they either did not receive or did not remember receiving the previous issue.
- 72% indicated that they read ONCC News online as opposed to printing a hard copy of the newsletter for later reading.
- 21% indicated that they read most issues thoroughly from cover to cover, 39% read at least some articles thoroughly, and another 39% typically skim articles.
- 36% indicated that they find content worth sharing with colleagues either by forwarding e-mail links or printing copies to share.

Nurses enjoy reading articles about what others do to promote certification, timely updates regarding testing and renewal information, and areas being researched for future change.

- The majority (59%) of respondents indicated a preference for continuing to receive issues via e-mail, whereas 38% said that they would prefer to receive future issues by mail in print format.

Although the majority of respondents indicated a preference for the electronic format, many respondents provided feedback regarding why they do not read issues online. Comments often reflected an overload of e-mail messages, with insufficient time to spend at the computer. In some cases, computer access was considered inconvenient or unreliable. Additionally, although e-mail with a link to the newsletter may be delivered to nurses’ inboxes at work, some facilities have restricted online access, representing a group of nurses that the newsletter no longer reaches.

When asked what they like most about ONCC News, nurses were largely positive in their responses, stating that they enjoy reading articles about what other nurses do to promote certification, timely updates regarding testing and renewal information, and areas being researched for future change, including subspecialty certification.

About one-third (381) of the readers responded to the question, “What would you like to see changed in ONCC News?” The majority of respondents indicated that they wanted nothing to be changed in the current content or format of the newsletter. Among other responses, comments ranged from increased diversity among writers, to the need for more educational and less administrative or biographical information, to making it easier (i.e., larger print) and more aesthetically appealing to read. Suggested topics for future articles included how to advocate for financial recognition of certification, personal practice stories from the bedside, motivational stories, and more experiences from community hospitals and clinics. Some nurses expressed concern that they do not have time to read ONCC News in its current electronic format and suggested that shorter articles with bulleted points may be a better design. At the same time, some readers requested that the newsletter return to the printed mailings and eliminate the e-mail version.

The ONCC Board will further examine and discuss the survey results. The ONCC News Editorial Board thanks everyone who took time to complete the survey. Only with honest feedback, both positive and negative, are we better able to meet your needs and evaluate plans for future issues.

More Nurses Promote the Benefits of Certification

Twenty-three certified nurses recently joined the Oncology Nursing Certification Advocates Program (ONCAP), bringing the roster to 559. Advocates are certified oncology nurses who voluntarily promote the benefits of certification among their colleagues. ONCC welcomes the following new volunteers.

Raquel Begelman, Winterville, NC
Kimberly A. Brown, Los Angeles, CA

Deborah Reynolds, Daytona Beach, FL
Sheila Sparks, Auburn, AL
Mona Stage, Seattle, WA
Linda Steiner, Princeton, IN
Ellen Stewart, Oklahoma City, OK
Cindy Streit, Marshfield, WI
Donna Washburn, Lynchburg, VA
Melissa Wood, Coos Bay, OR

To join ONCAP or to view a list of advocates by state, visit www.oncc.org/support/advocatesprogram.shtml.
With more than 25,000 certified oncology nurses throughout the world, keeping every certified nurse up to date on ONCC events, issues, and announcements can be challenging. Keeping nurses connected through ONCC News is one way that ONCC works to accomplish its goal of enhancing professional practice, as cited in ONCC’s mission statement.

ONCC News is published quarterly by an editorial board that consists of four volunteer members. The current editorial board members are Chair Heather Mackey, RN, MSN, APRN, BC, AOCN®, Mark Flitcraft, RN, BSN, OCN®, Janice Nuuhiwa, RN, MSN, CPON®, and Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®. Carol Brueggen, RN, MS, APRN-BC, AOCNS®, recently joined the editorial board as the ONCC Board liaison to ONCC News for the upcoming year.

Editorial board members represent the gamut of oncology certification and, therefore, have a vested interest in providing relevant information to all ONCC constituents. The diversity within the editorial board contributes to the comprehensiveness of the publication. All editorial board members are dedicated to creating a usable and timely tool to help certified oncology nurses stay connected to the organization at large.

Gathering four times a year via conference call, the editorial board creates the content for each issue of ONCC News. Newsletter content is guided by current events in ONCC as well as the Oncology Nursing Society and the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses. Articles are constructed to recognize excellence (“Employer Spotlight” and articles highlighting award recipients), provide certification-related updates (“President’s Message,” “Editor’s Message,” and ONCC Board updates), pose certification questions (“Readers Respond” and the new “Practice Round”), and announce volunteer opportunities (calls for item writers and board nominations).

Articles are geared toward equipping certified nurses with the information they need to be well informed as well as providing information that affects certification and the certification process. Many articles include quotations from interviews with certified nurses across the country. Guest editorials are encouraged to share the experiences of our colleagues.

If you are interested in contributing to ONCC News, please e-mail oncc@ons.org. Watch future issues for a call for new editorial board members—we would love to have you join us!
Practice Round
Sharpen Your Test-Taking Skills With Sample Test Items

“Practice Round” is a new feature that offers sample items from ONCC practice tests. The following items were taken from an OCN® practice test. The answer, rationale, and reference for each item can be found at the end of the column.

Please note that these items do not appear on current OCN® examinations and were written for previous tests that are no longer in use. Because they may be older test items, the references cited may have been replaced by more recent versions. When preparing for an ONCC certification examination, candidates should always use the current test blueprint and reference list for the specific examination. Although these practice items may be helpful in demonstrating the format of ONCC test items, they are not intended to be study materials.

Additional practice test items will be published in future issues of ONCC News. Web-based practice tests for the OCN® and CPON® examinations can be purchased at www.oncc.org/getcertified/practicetests.shtml. A free Web-based practice test is available for each ONCC certification examination.

1. Which of the following interventions is helpful in managing the adverse side effects of antidepressants?
   A. Monitoring body temperature daily
   B. Following a low-fiber diet
   C. Using sugarless gum or hard candies
   D. Taking the antidepressant on an as-needed basis

2. Which of the following conditions is a complication that can occur after a percutaneous lung biopsy is performed?
   A. Pleural effusion
   B. Atelectasis
   C. Pneumothorax
   D. Pneumonia

Answers
1. C. Rationale: A common side effect of most antidepressants is a dry mouth. Patients are encouraged to suck on hard candies, chew sugarless gum, and perform frequent mouth care.


2. C. Rationale: A lung biopsy is performed by inserting a spinal-type needle into the chest cavity to obtain tissue for examination. Air can be introduced into the chest cavity during the procedure and can cause pneumothorax.


Online OCN® Review Course Offers Convenient, Self-Paced Learning

The Oncology Nursing Society has introduced a new online OCN® review course that offers a convenient learning format for nurses who are planning to take the OCN® examination or are looking for a general review of oncology nursing.

Students engage in self-paced reading assignments and learning activities that cover the major subject areas on the current OCN® Test Blueprint.

The course is intended to accompany the Core Curriculum for Oncology Nursing (4th ed., Elsevier, 2005). Learn more at http://oncc.org/Education/DistanceEducation/OCNReviewOL/index.shtml.

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ONCC Mission Statement
The mission of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation is to promote and provide oncology nursing certification for the enhancement of patient care and professional practice.

The Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation was established for the development, administration, and evaluation of a program for certification in oncology nursing. Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, 125 Enterprise Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1214 (877-769-ONCC or 412-859-6104, phone; 412-859-6168, fax; oncc@ons.org, e-mail; www.oncc.org, Web site)