Subspecialty Certification:
What Is the Purpose, How Is It Different, and How Does It Benefit Me?

The purpose of the OCN® examination is to validate an individual nurse’s knowledge in the specialty of oncology nursing. The OCN® examination covers general oncology topics that the nurse might encounter in daily practice and tests knowledge necessary to practice competently at the basic level. The purpose of oncology subspecialty certification is similar, but rather than focusing broadly, subspecialty certification focuses on a more narrow area. The intent of both examinations is to validate knowledge and establish minimal competency standards. By achieving subspecialty certification, nurses are able to demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and experience within a narrower field of oncology.

Why did ONCC decide to offer subspecialty certification?

The idea of pursuing subspecialty certification was first introduced in 2005. For several years prior to that time, various oncology nursing groups had contacted ONCC with requests to consider adding certification examinations in oncology nursing subspecialties. Many desired an additional level of certification reflecting their specialized knowledge in treatment modalities or specific types of cancer. The ONCC Board of Directors began initial research into the feasibility (See “Subspecialty Certification,” page 4)

President’s Message

Thanks for Asking!
Vicki J. Norton, RN, BSN, OCN®

Dear Colleagues,

Listening and responding to questions, concerns, or ideas of oncology nurses who are certified or interested in certification are goals of the ONCC Certification News, which is the ONCC Board’s formal way of communicating with you. In this issue, we want to respond to your questions about the development of the new Certified Breast Care Nurse (CBCN) examination, as well as plans for future subspecialty credentials.

You will read about the journey that the Board and organization have taken to make the decision to pursue subspecialty examinations, deciding which subspecialties to develop, and determining the best way to deliver those examinations. Thanks for asking!
In 2010, ONCC will introduce the Certified Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurse (CPHON) examination. The addition of hematology to the examination content is a result of the role delineation study of certified pediatric oncology nursing practice conducted in 2008, which indicated that hematology is a portion of the practice of a statistically significant number of certified nurses.

Nurses who pass the test will earn the CPHON credential. Nurses who currently hold the CPON® credential will be able to renew it for as long as desired by Option 1: Practice hours + Professional Development Activities (known as the Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option, or ONC-PRO). Learn more about CPHON certification at http://www.oncc.org/getcertified/cphon.shtml.

### 2010 CPHON Test Blueprint

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<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>II. Disease Related Biology</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. Supportive Care and Symptom Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. Pediatric Oncologic and Hematologic Emergencies</td>
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<td>VI. Long-Term Follow-Up And Survivorship</td>
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<td>VII. Health Maintenance</td>
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<td>VIII. End-Of-Life Care</td>
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<td>IX. Professional Performance</td>
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Renewal Options Updated

It’s never too early to think about certification renewal and the requirements for maintaining your credential(s). ONCC-certified nurses should be aware of three components to certification renewal.

- Practice hours
- Professional development activities (known as the Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option or ONC-PRO)
- Successful testing

Two of the three components must be met for certification renewal. The combinations of these components provide three renewal options.

- Option 1: Practice hours + professional development activities (ONC-PRO)
- Option 2: Practice hours + successful testing
- Option 3: Professional development activities (ONC-PRO) + successful testing

The number of practice hours required for certification renewal varies for each credential. Nurses can find specific eligibility criteria as well as additional information about certification renewal options at http://www.oncc.org/renewal.
Lauri Linder Elected to ONCC Board

Congratulations to Lauri Linder, PhD(c), APRN, CPON®, of Salt Lake City, UT, who was elected to the ONCC Board of Directors in the election held November 5–December 11, 2008.

Linder is an Assistant Professor/Clinical Nurse Specialist at the University of Utah College of Nursing. She will begin her three-year term June 1, 2009.

Voter participation topped 9% this year, with 2,429 certified nurses casting ballots. Congratulations to Joan O’Hanlon Curry of New York, Janet Norin of Illinois, and Robbie Norville of Texas who were selected randomly by the election administrator from all voters to each win a $100 gift card.

Test Your Breast Care Knowledge

Nurses interested in the Certified Breast Care Nurse (CBCN) examination will want to check out the free Web-based CBCN practice test now available from ONCC.

The CBCN practice test includes 20 items, the correct answer for each, and the reference and rationale for each correct answer. This online test provides users with examples of how actual ONCC certification examination items are written.

Additional CBCN practice tests will be developed in the coming months. Practice tests also are available for OCN®, CPON®, AOCNP®, and AOCNS® examinations online at http://www.oncc.org/getcertified/practicetests.shtml.

New Employer Award in 2010

Beginning in 2010, ONCC will accept nominations for its Employer Recognition Award from organizations in two categories: (1) those that employ less than 25 RNs and (2) those that employ 25 or more RNs.

The suggestion to have separate awards for small and large employers came from a certified nurse, who pointed out the differences in the level of resources available to each type of organization.

Nomination forms for the 2010 ONCC Awards are available on the ONCC Web site (www.oncc.org). Nomination forms for the 2010 Roberta Scofield Memorial Certification Awards, the OCN® of the Year, the CPON® of the Year, the Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year, and the Pearl Moore Certification Champion Award also are available on the Web site.

Applications for the 2010 Scofield Awards (free registration for 2010 certification) are due August 1, 2009. Nominations for the 2010 OCN® of the Year, Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse of the Year, Pearl Moore Certification Champion Award, and Employer Recognition Awards are due December 1, 2009. Nominations for the 2010 CPON® of the Year are due April 1, 2010.

CPON® of the Year Nominations Due April 1

Nominees are wanted for the 2009 CPON® of the Year Award. Nominees will be evaluated on their accomplishments in pediatric oncology nursing, oncology nursing service, and promotion of certification.

The winner will receive $1,000 and a crystal award at the 2009 Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses Annual Conference in September.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from http://www.oncc.org/awards/cpon.shtml. Completed nominations must be received by April 1, 2009. Nominate someone today!
Subspecialty Certification (continued from page 1)

of offering subspecialty certifications by studying the trends in subspecialty examinations in other nursing specialties, potential subject areas, number of potential applicants, and the need for financial and other resources. It was determined that the areas of greatest demand that were potentially self-sustaining were in the fields of breast care, radiation therapy, and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation. After careful review of business plans for subspecialty certification and surveying of oncology and nononcology nurses, the ONCC Board decided to proceed with breast care as the first subspecialty certification offered.

How are the topics for subspecialty certification chosen? What are the plans for future subspecialty certification examinations?

Deciding which subspecialty certifications to pursue is a monumental task. The ONCC Board began by performing an in-depth subject analysis. The Board needs to be certain that the content area is significantly robust to warrant a certification program and that enough nurses will be interested in attaining the certification. The development and maintenance of a certification program requires extensive resources. To assure program solvency, the question of continued demand is analyzed to justify the financial and human resources required for program success. On the subject of future subspecialty choice, Josephine Visser, RN, BSN, OCN®, Vice-President of the ONCC Board of Directors, states, “Our vision and goals on the subspecialty certifications will reflect what our stakeholders request and what is financially feasible. We will move forward as we see the feasibility for each program.”

As above, the topics of breast care, radiation therapy, and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation were the first topics identified by the ONCC Board of Directors as potential subspecialty certification topics. In the case of breast care certification, a role delineation study (RDS) was conducted on the topic of breast care nursing, and the results were reviewed by the ONCC Board prior to the recommendation to proceed. By the time this issue goes to print, the first breast care certification examinations will have been offered (February 2009). Plans for an RDS of radiation therapy nursing is underway. Over the next six months, an analysis of the radiation therapy nursing role will be conducted. The results of that analysis, along with other data, will be used by the ONCC Board to make a decision as to whether a certification program in that area should be developed. Similarly, the Board is planning to analyze the subject of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in the future, and based on that analysis, will make a recommendation whether or not to pursue subspecialty certification in that area.

How are subspecialty certification examinations developed?

The first step in devising a subspecialty examination begins with the RDS or job analysis. An RDS identifies the tasks and responsibilities important and essential to a nursing role and the knowledge necessary for competent performance in that role. ONCC conducts an RDS at least every five years for each of its certification programs to ensure the knowledge tested reflects current practice. The results of the RDS pave the way for constructing an outline of the subject areas that must be included on a certification examination. The outline, known as a test blueprint, is used to guide the development of test items.

Test items are developed by certified nurses who have expertise in the subject areas covered by the test. Generally, a call for item writers is issued, and those who are selected attend an item writing workshop, where they learn how to develop test items. Specific topic areas from a test blueprint are assigned to each item writer, who then begins the process of creating multiple-choice test items based on their practice and expertise and validated by established references. In the case of the Certified Breast Care Nurse (CBCN) examination, 21 nurses participated in an item-writing workshop in February 2008. During that weekend, they developed 200 items for use on the examination. Once the items were written, they were field tested by volunteers prior to the start of the 2008 ONS Congress in Philadelphia, PA. The purpose of the field test was to measure the statistical performance of test items that had been developed for the CBCN examination, prior to their inclusion on an actual test. Seven of the participants in the workshop were asked to join the new CBCN Test Development Committee, led by Debra K. Swan, RN, MS, APRN-BC, AOCN®.

(See “Subspecialty Certification,” page 5)
Subspecialty Certification (continued from page 4)

This committee, in collaboration with ONCC staff and the testing agency, Pearson VUE, met to review the results of the field test and assemble the first forms of the CBCN examination, to be administered in February 2009. Shortly after the committee assembled the CBCN examination, another Task Force (twelve breast care nurses) was formed to set the passing score for the examination. The group process was facilitated by Pearson VUE staff over two days using a method called the Modified Angoff. The result of the meeting was a recommended passing score for the CBCN Certification Examination.

Following the February administration of the CBCN examination, an extensive analysis of all of the items will be conducted. This analysis will be reviewed and decisions regarding items that do not perform well will be made (e.g., some may be eliminated from scoring or more than one option may be scored correct). The final passing score will be recommended and approved by the Board of Directors. Because of this analysis, final scores will not be provided to the first group of CBCN candidates until six weeks after the close of the testing interval.

Will subspecialty certification ever replace the general certification?

No, the ONCC Board does not foresee any time when subspecialty certification would replace general certification in oncology nursing.

What is the eligibility criteria for subspecialty certification?

The eligibility criteria for each ONCC credential is specific to the certification examination it represents. Similarly, the eligibility criteria for subspecialty certifications must be reflective of the knowledge required for competent practice in the specialty area. The ONCC Board carefully considers the scope of the subspecialty area before setting appropriate eligibility criteria necessary for each certification examination. For example, the eligibility criteria for the CBCN examination includes the following.

- Current, active, unrestricted RN license at the time of application and examination.
- A minimum of one year (12 months) experience as an RN within the three years (36 months) prior to application.
- A minimum of 1,000 hours of breast care nursing practice within the two-and-one-half years (30 months) prior to application.
- A minimum of 10 contact hours of continuing education in breast care nursing within the past three years.

If additional specialty certifications are established in the future, the ONCC Board will carefully determine the required eligibility criteria for each. The eligibility criteria for all ONCC certifications are considered independently and may vary depending on the credential to be awarded.

How long is subspecialty certification valid?

Currently, all ONCC certifications are valid for four years. However, like eligibility criteria, renewal criteria are set by the Board for each specific credential. ONCC offers several renewal options that may include practice hours, professional development activities (known as the Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option, or ONC-PRO), or successful testing. See “Renewal Options Updated” on page 2.

Can I hold more than one certification?

Yes, you may hold more than one certification at a time, provided you meet the eligibility criteria for each credential at the time of application, testing, and renewal. In fact, more than 150 ONCC-certified nurses currently hold multiple credentials. For example, you may wish to be certified as an OCN® and also have a specialty certification as a CBCN.

Are there plans for an advanced CPON® examination in the immediate future?

At present, 1,772 Certified Pediatric Oncology Nurses (CPON®) exist. Of those, 275 identify themselves as either nurse practitioners (NPs) or clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and 386 have a master’s degree or higher. In contrast to the numbers for pediatric oncology, in adult oncology, the numbers are about 10 times higher. Based on ONS membership, there are 6,692 ONS members with a master’s degree and 3,549 who are NPs or CNSs.

(See “Subspecialty Certification,” page 7)
Employers Staff Their Facilities With Certified Nurses

ONCC recently awarded 30 recognition plaques to institutions for staffing their facilities with oncology-certified nurses. ONCC provides these plaques free of charge to oncology patient care settings in which the majority of professional nurses are ONCC-certified (download the plaque request form at http://www.oncc.org/awards/docs/Plaque_Orderform-Feb2006.pdf). Congratulations to these organizations.

Aurora West Allis Medical Center/Aurora Womens Pavillion, Medical Oncology/Infusion Center in Wisconsin
Bond Clinic, Oncology in Rolla, MO
Calvert Memorial Hospital, Infusion Therapy in Prince Frederick, MD
Cancer Center in Sedona, AZ
Cantor, Biemann, Fellin, Tropea, DeShoyers, Infusion Suite in Norristown, PA
Commonwealth Hematology Oncology, PC, Quincy Office in Massachusetts
Commonwealth Hematology Oncology PC, Weymouth Office in Massachusetts
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Case Management in Philadelphia, PA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Clinical Nurse Specialists in Philadelphia, PA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Nursing Recruitment in Philadelphia, PA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Preadmission in Philadelphia, PA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Preop in Philadelphia, PA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Radiation in Philadelphia, PA
Front Range Cancer Specialists in Fort Collins, CO
Highland Medical Center, Cancer Care Program in Burien, WA
Heartland Hematology/Oncology Associates in Kansas City, MO
Holy Family Hospital, Oncology Clinic in Methuen, MA
James Cancer Hospital, James Care Chemotherapy in Dublin, OH
Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Oncology Center in Kansas
MetroWest Medical Center, Radiation Oncology in Framingham, MA
Michigan State University, Breslin Cancer Center in Lansing, MI
MultiCare Health System Regional Cancer Center, Allenmore Hospital in Tacoma, WA
New Hanover Radiation Oncology in Wilmington, NC
Rocky Mountain Cancer Centers, Medical Oncology in Boulder, CO
Rush-Copley Medical Center, Outpatient Cancer Care Center in Aurora, IL
Savannah Gynecologic Oncology in Georgia
St. Joseph’s Hospital, Medical/Radiation Oncology in West Bend, WI
The Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center at Fairview Hospital, Mill Pavillion in Ohio
Well Group Health Partners, Oncology, in Chicago Heights, IL
Wright Patterson Air Force Base Medical Center, Hematology Oncology Clinic in Ohio

Funding Available for Chapter Certification Projects

In 2009, ONCC will award up to five grants, for a combined total of $5,000, to chapters of ONS or the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses to fund activities that encourage, support, or recognize oncology certification of nurses.

To be eligible to receive a grant, a chapter must submit an application form that identifies the scope of the intended project and expected outcomes. Priority will be given to projects for which the chapter will provide matching funds.

Funding priority also will be given to projects that can be sustained or repeated, rather than limited or one-time events. Chapters that receive funding will be expected to provide a brief report on the outcomes of the project, so that the ideas may be shared with other groups.

Applications for funding are due June 1, 2009. For more information, visit http://www.oncc.org/awards/chapter.shtml, or contact ONCC at 877-769-6622 or oncc@ons.org. Take advantage of this opportunity for your chapter!
Is There a Writer in You?

Unleash your inner author, and join the ONCC Certification News Editorial Board! Two certified nurses are wanted to serve on the Editorial Board.

The primary responsibilities are to participate in the planning of four issues per year of the Certification News and to write assigned articles. All work is completed via conference calls and e-mail—no travel required. Learn more at http://www.oncc.org/about/volunteer.shtml or download the ONCC Committee Application Form at http://www.oncc.org/about/docs/CommitteeApplication.pdf, and submit it to oncc@ons.org by March 15, 2009.

Recognition Breakfast to Honor Certified Nurses at ONS Congress

The Recognition Breakfast for Oncology Certified Nurses will be held Friday, May 1, 2009, from 6:30–8:15 am in conjunction with the ONS Annual Congress in San Antonio, TX, that will be held from April 30–May 3, 2009. During the event, ONCC will recognize ONCC award winners and feature keynote speaker Barb Bancroft, RN, MSN, PNP. Bancroft will present “Livin’, Laughin’, and Learnin’ Through the Years.”

Attendance is limited to 1,000 participants. Tickets will be reserved on a first-come basis.

We hope to see you there!

Barb Bancroft, RN, MSN, PNP, keynote speaker for the recognition breakfast

Subspecialty Certification (continued from page 6)

In addition, some family and adult NPs who work in oncology are not members of ONS. Currently, the number of candidates taking the adult oncology advanced examinations only just meet the criteria to maintain examinations that can be considered sound and reliable. APHON currently has 3,044 members with 415 who are NPs or CNSs and 579 who have a master’s degree or higher. Statistically, not enough candidates exist to structure a meaningful examination for pediatric oncology advanced practice nurses.

Editor’s Message

All You Wanted to Know About Subspecialty Certification (and More)!
Heather Mackey, RN, MSN, ANP, AOCN®

This issue of the ONCC Certification News focuses on the topic of subspecialty certification. As members of the ONCC Board of Directors and the News’ Editorial Board have traveled throughout the country, questions related to subspecialty certification have been raised. We hope that through this issue of the newsletter, you will learn more about what subspecialty certification is and what it is not, what the plans are for current and future examination topics, and how subspecialty certification can benefit you and improve the quality of care delivered to our patients.

Let us know what you think at oncc@ons.org.

Readers Respond

“What questions do you have about subspecialty certification?”

Email your responses to oncc@ons.org or fax to +1-412-859-6168. Please reference “Readers Respond” in your comments.
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 (+1-877-769-ONCC or +1-412-859-6104, phone; +1-412-859-6168, fax; oncc@ons.org, e-mail; www.oncc.org, Web site)

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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 (+1-877-769-ONCC or +1-412-859-6104, phone; +1-412-859-6168, fax; oncc@ons.org, e-mail; www.oncc.org, Web site)

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ONCC Mission Statement

Promote Your Review Course for Free!

If your chapter or institution offers a certification review course, you can promote it for free on the ONCC Web site. Just send the course title, date(s), location, and contact information to oncc@ons.org. ONCC offers a list of review courses at http://www.oncc.org/getcertified/reviewcourses.shtml.

ONCC receives many requests for information about review courses. Listing your course on the ONCC Web site is a great way to promote your chapter’s educational offerings. Let us help you spread the word to nurses in your community who may not be aware of your events.

Mark Your Calendar

Application Deadlines for 2009 Tests

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<tr>
<th>OCN®, CPON®, CBCN Test Dates</th>
<th>Early Application Deadline (save $75)</th>
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Note. AOCNP® and AOCNS® tests are offered year-round. Candidates may apply at any time, and if eligible, will receive an authorization to test that provides for a 90-day testing window.