



certification/news

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2010 ONCC Award Winners Inspire and Challenge

Susan Wozniak, MS, RN, OCN®

What does it take to be an award winner? Do you know someone you can nominate? Is that person you? The award criteria are simple—nominees must demonstrate accomplishments in the promotion of oncology nursing certification and oncology nursing service. The 2010 award recipients were highly accomplished.



Robin Stewart, RN, PhD, OCN®
2010 OCN® of the Year

Robin is credited with bringing innovative clinical trials to Lakeland Regional Cancer Center (LRCC) in Florida where she develops and oversees nurse-initiated clinical trials, participates in weekly tumor board conferences and research investigator meetings, and manages the clinical research department at the institution. She is the principal investigator of a nurse-initiated study to address taste alterations in patients receiving platinum-based chemotherapy, and she has co-written a physician-initiated clinical trial on sentinel lymph node mapping in colon cancer.

In the past eight years, Robin has spoken to over 2,000 patients about clinical trials and participated in U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval trials of over 25 new drugs. As manager of clinical research at LRCC, Robin advocates for certification support by budgeting for the financial aspects of certification for the nursing staff. As president of the Polk County Chapter of ONS, she advocates for certification by disseminating test prep materials and providing the members with information on potential funding resources. Robin represents oncology nursing throughout the community.

She chairs Lakeland's Cancer Survivor Day celebration, speaks at numerous community support groups, is involved in local American Cancer Society events and community breast

cancer educational events, discusses oncology nursing at local elementary schools and nursing schools, and has mentored over 25 nurses at the bachelor's, master's, and doctorate levels.

Robin, who first became certified in 2003, reflects—"Being certified shows an extra level of commitment to your craft. It provides patients with the comfort and knowledge that the person caring for them is dedicated to oncology and to giving them the best care and outcomes possible." About her specialty, Robin says, "Oncology has changed me such that I value every day that God allows me to enjoy. My relationships are richer, my friendships are stronger, and my respect for patients with cancer grows greater every day. I am truly blessed to be able to spend this season with each and every one of them!"

Robin challenges each of us to be our best by saying "Never stop asking yourself 'What if?' There is no room for complacency in oncology, and each day brings new opportunities to explore. That is how we grow and conquer new heights. Dream big and believe that you can accomplish anything. And always remember that we do not travel this road alone—make sure that you never forget those who support you along the way."



Karen Roesser, RN, MS, AOCN®
2010 AOCN® of the Year

As an oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist and Genetic Educator at Thomas Johns Cancer Hospital, in Richmond, VA, Karen is the co-coordinator of a high-risk cancer clinic for patients at risk for hereditary cancers. As the coordinator of a multidisciplinary team on colorectal cancer, she led the organization's efforts to attain the Joint Commission Colorectal Cancer Disease-Specific Care Certification.

("Award Winners" continued on page 6)



President's Message

Securing Our Future

Josephine Visser, RN, BSN, OCN®

It's that time of year again when we reflect on the past and begin to prepare for the year to come. 2011 will be an exciting year for ONCC as we mark 25 years of certification in oncology nursing. It is my privilege to be president of ONCC as we celebrate this historic occasion.

I began this role in June filled with excitement about the future and reverence for the work accomplished by past ONCC presidents and Boards. The leaders during the past 25 years have made ONCC a premier certification organization against which other certifications are benchmarked. As you practice oncology nursing and prepare for certification, I ask you to please be mindful of those nurses who worked hard to produce quality certification examinations that reflect your specialized knowledge.

It is because of this emphasis on quality that the ONCC Board of Directors embarked on two strategic initiatives. The first relates to security of

the examinations. Maintaining examination security and confidentiality is paramount to the validity and reliability of the certification process. ONCC works with our testing partner, Pearson VUE, to maintain the highest standards of test security. However, sometimes certification candidates and other stakeholders, such as employers and educators, may not fully understand their role and responsibilities in test security. For example, "debriefing," which is when nurses who've taken a certification test share information about specific test content, is not appropriate (see "Is This Cheating?" on page 3). In fact, engaging in this process is a violation of the confidentiality agreement that candidates sign to take the test. Sharing information about test content could result in revocation of certification or denial of access to certification. Therefore, ONCC has undertaken an initiative to ensure that all stakeholders fully understand their role in maintaining

examination security.

The second initiative relates to quality improvement in the processes that measure continuing competency (See "Facing the Challenge of Continuing Competency" page 4). The ONCC Board is examining methods used by other certifying bodies in health care to determine ways that ONCC recertification requirements might be strengthened. This process is expected to take a year or more. Decisions about changes in certification renewal processes would be communicated well in advance of implementation.

We hope that you will join us in celebrating 25 years of oncology nursing certification at the ONS Congress next spring and at the APHON meeting next fall. In addition to the Recognition Breakfast for Oncology Certified Nurses and the Certification Oasis, special events will be planned. Stay tuned for further updates as we finalize our plans.

Editorial Board Members Change

The ONCC *Certification News* Editorial Board would like to express its gratitude to Susan Wozniak, MS, RN, OCN®, for her service. She graciously agreed to stay on beyond her term to

assist the board with this issue. Thank you, Susan, for your dedication!

New members who will be joining the Board with the next issue include Deena Centofanti, RN, MS, AOCN®, of New

Brunswick, NJ, and Michelle Ellis, RN, OCN®, CBCN®, of San Louis Obispo, CA. Watch for their articles on certification related topics beginning with the next issue of *Certification News*.

New ONCC Certification Tests Qualify for GI Bill

The Certified Breast Care Nurse (CBCN®) and Certified Pediatric Hematology Oncology Nurse (CPHON®) examinations have met the criteria for approval for Veterans Education under the provisions of Title 38

of the United States Code. The OCN®, AOCNP®, and AOCNS® tests were granted approval several years ago. This means that qualified veterans and individuals can receive reimbursement for any ONCC certification test. In most

instances, the request for reimbursement must be received within one year of taking the test.

For more information on requesting benefits, go to www.gibill.va.gov.



Parent-Professional in Action: Family Advocate in Oncology

Ashley Leak, RN, MSN, OCN®

Having the opportunity to be a part of a national organization that promotes professional development through certification has been rewarding for Kathy Riley, BS, who joined the ONCC Board of Directors as the public member in March 2010. Kathy became involved with ONCC through her community interactions as the executive director of We Can Pediatric Brain Tumor Network.

We Can was cofounded in 1996 by Gigi Mc-Millan and Kathy Riley, two mothers whose children were diagnosed and treated for brain tumors. Both mothers noted similar changes in their young sons after brain surgery. After realizing that few resources exist for parents, they cofounded We Can as an educational and advocacy network for children and their caregivers. We Can brings families together to network, share their stories, and equip each other to manage the treatment and recovery of their children. The We Can programs include hospital outreach in which trained veteran parents meet one-on-one with patient families in a variety of settings, including the clinic



and hospital. We Can offers teen and young adult group meetings, parent educational meetings, weekend family camps in English and Spanish, parent-to-parent mentorship programs, and a bereavement program.

Kathy attended her first ONCC Board meeting in July 2010, during the ONCC/ONS Leadership Weekend. She considers it an honor to be involved in the decision making of the ONCC board and looks forward to relaying information back to her community. She has served on other community committees that are dedicated to enhancing the quality and accessibility of health care for patients with a cancer diagnosis and their families. Kathy states "I'm impressed with the ONCC mission and thrilled to be a part of an organization that seeks to provide safe, quality care coupled with professional practice." Thank you, Kathy, for all that you do for ONCC and the pediatric oncology community!

Additional information about We Can Pediatric Brain Tumor Network is available at www.wecan.com.



Is This Cheating?

"What questions did you get?"

Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®

The practice of sharing certification test items with others after taking an ONCC certification examination may be tempting. Certainly, others will be curious, and sharing may seem like a simple gesture in helping. However, doing so violates the security agreement to which all certification test candidates agree. This agreement is a legally binding contract and if it is violated, ONCC can take action against both the provider of the information as well as the receiver, including revocation of certification and denial of certification. In other words, a nurse who has passed the test and then shares information about the specific content of the test may have his or her certification revoked. The nurse who has never taken the examination and receives the information can be denied the opportunity to take the test. In addition, if ONCC is made aware of a security breach, it may invalidate the scores of every nurse who has taken a particular form or forms of the examination. This could affect thousands of nurses in any given year. In addition, rebuilding an examination that has

been breached can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In brief, the security agreement requires test candidates to agree to NOT copy, reproduce, discuss, or disclose examination content by any means. It is provided to all test candidates before beginning a computer-based examination. Only those candidates who indicate agreement receive the examination.

A passing score on an ONCC certification examination is validation of the nurse's knowledge of oncology nursing. Prior knowledge of specific items on the examination constitutes cheating and invalidates the score that a nurse achieves.

It is inappropriate to share specific test content with anyone, including other nurses, employers, supervisors, instructors, and educators, even if they have no intention of taking the test. Instructors may view asking post-examination candidates to share as a way of keeping their review course current, but this is really just another way of cheating the process.

("Cheating" continued on page 6)



Facing the Challenge of Continued Competency

Michael Smart, RN, BSN, OCN®

Among the issues discussed at the July meeting of the ONCC Board was that of continuing competency. Obtaining certification, whether in oncology or other nursing specialties, is a validation of knowledge and applied critical thinking skills as demonstrated by a passing score on a certification examination. The process through which those who are certified demonstrate knowledge maintenance is sometimes referred to as “continuing competency.”

Continuing competency is measured in a variety of ways by licensing and certification organizations. Unfortunately, not a lot of empirical data exists to support the use of one method over another. Requiring candidates to retake and pass the examination is an objective measure that used to be required by ONCC. This measure was not popular among certified nurses, primarily because no one likes to take tests. On average, approximately 98% of those who retook the examination for recertification passed it. This method does not demonstrate expansion of knowledge, only that the nurse has maintained the same level of knowledge that was measured by initial certification. Retaking

and passing the examination is still an option for ONCC-recertification and used by about 5% of the nurses who renew their certification. ONCC calls retesting “Option 2.”

The Oncology Nursing Certification Points Renewal Option (ONC-PRO) allows nurses to complete professional development activities, such as continuing nursing education (CNE), which can count as points toward certification renewal. This renewal option (called Option 1 by ONCC) is immensely popular as evidenced by the number of nurses who choose to renew their certification by ONC-PRO points versus re-examination.

Both retesting and ONC-PRO require that the renewal candidates have a minimum number of practice hours. Nurses who do not have the practice hours may renew certification by ONCC Option 3, which requires both successfully retesting as well as meeting the ONC-PRO requirements. Most nurses who use ONC-PRO for certification renewal attain the majority of their points through CNE. While the use of CNE programs is recognized for its importance in building and maintaining knowledge, it has

limitations in the demonstration of continuing competency related to certification. The issue of determining the best methods to document continuing competency is prominent among credentialing organizations, educational institutions and regulatory boards. Pressure on licensing and certification organizations from consumer groups exists to better measure the continuing competence of health professionals. In July, the ONCC Board of Directors made the decision to evaluate various methods of assessing and documenting continued competence among oncology certified nurses. A task force has been formed to review recent research and evaluate the pros and cons of various approaches to recertification.

ONCC recognizes nurses’ dedication to certification and is committed to maintaining the value of certification in oncology nursing. Meeting this goal requires continued evaluation of current processes as well as a willingness to look at areas in which improvement or change may be warranted. Please stay tuned for more information as the Board evaluates and makes decisions for improvements.

ONCC Board of Directors Approves New Mission Statement

At their recent Board meeting in November, the ONCC Board of Directors approved a new mission statement for ONCC. The new mission statement

was adopted to more accurately reflect ONCC’s purpose and the role of certification in the changing field of oncology nursing. The new mission is: to

promote excellence in patient care and professional practice by validating specialized knowledge in oncology nursing and related specialties.

Five Nurses Win Free Certification for Life

Five nurses randomly were selected to win a lifetime of free certification renewal from ONCC. The winners were selected from candidates who

submitted applications to renew their ONCC certification this year before June 15, 2010. This year’s winners include Gina Flemming, RN, CPON®; Angela

Gagliardi, RN, BSN, OCN®; Holly Sansoucie, RN, AOCN® ; Diane Ward, RN, BSN, OCN®; and Lesley Wilson, RN, OCN®.



Congratulations to the 2010 ONCC Employer Recognition Award Winners!

Janice Nuuhiwa, MSN, RN, APN/CNS, CPON®

The ONCC Employer Recognition Awards recognize organizations that provide sustained support and recognition of oncology certified nurses. Two awards are available: one for organizations that employ less than 25 registered nurses and one for organizations that employ 25 or more registered nurses. Certified nurses who nominate their organization must provide supportive documentation that demonstrates the organization's commitment to champion oncology certification.

Congratulations to Mid Florida Hematology/Oncology Centers in Orange City, FL, for winning in their category (less than 25 RNs). Mid Florida Hematology/Oncology Centers have 65% of their RN staff certified and the remaining RNs working toward certification. The organization values oncology certification and provides support throughout the process. Not only do they fiscally support the nurse seeking certification with test prep, testing fees, and resource materials, but successful nurses also receive an immediate raise upon attainment of certification. Mid Florida Hematology/Oncology Centers ensure their certified nurses receive proper recognition for their accomplishment; therefore, they circulate an announcement throughout all the centers and have flowers sent to the newly certified nurses at their workplace. Certified nurses also are recognized at patient support groups, speaking engagements, and in discussion

panels. As an organization, the Mid Florida Hematology/Oncology Centers provide continuing support for all nurses seeking recertification. They cover all related fees and allow for paid time off for participation in national committees and organizations. From test prepara-



A few of the oncology certified nurses from the Mid-Florida Hematology Oncology Centers

tion to the recertification process, Mid Florida Hematology/Oncology Centers exhibit their strong commitment to certified oncology nurses. Congratulations on your achievement!

Congratulations to Saint Vincent Health Center in Erie, PA, winner in the category for institutions with 25 or more RNs. Saint Vincent Health Center shapes



Carla Mayhugh, RN, MSN, OCN®, and Vicki Norton, RN, BSN, OCN®

the expectation for oncology certification from the very beginning of employment. Their job descriptions and advertisements indicate a preference for certified nurses. Not only do they provide financial support by paying for initial testing and renewal fees up front but also have human resources available to support staff seeking certification. The Oncology Clinical Specialist facilitates study groups for test candidates as well as guides them through the preparation materials available to them by the organization. Saint Vincent Health Center provides free continuing education events for staff to obtain the contact hours needed to sit for the

examination or for renewal, including paid time to complete online educational courses as well as the ONS Chemotherapy/Biotherapy program. Once certification is achieved, nurses can expect to be celebrated through the health center as they are showcased via a PowerPoint display in the hospital lobby, recognized in hospital publications, and able to see their certificates framed and displayed in their nursing stations. Certified nurses are presented with updated identification badges that display their credentials and are honored at the annual certification luncheon hosted by the chief nursing officer. From the recruitment process to certification renewal, Saint Vincent Health Center clearly demonstrates its level of commitment to sustaining certification within the organization. Congratulations, Saint Vincent Health Center!

Cheating *(continued from page 3)*

An educator or instructor who “debriefs” with test candidates jeopardizes the certification status of those candidates who have passed the test, those who are planning to take the test, and themselves.

ONCC considers test security to be of paramount importance, as it is the linchpin to the reliability of test scores. The primary purpose of certification is protection of the public, in that it provides consumers and employers with an indication of the level of competence of healthcare providers. It is essential that certification examinations remain secure to meet this purpose.

Award Winners *(continued from page 1)*

You may recognize Karen’s name, as she has authored numerous book chapters, journal articles, and oncology continuing nursing education articles as well as presented at ONS Congress over the past 15 years. Her involvement in ONS includes serving as associate editor of the Web site, co-authoring a course on treatment basics, and serving as a chemotherapy/biotherapy trainer.

Karen first obtained OCN® certification in 1987 and then AOCN® certification in 1996. “That was only the second year that AOCN® certification was available. I wanted to be the first person in my community to do this. I always have been very proud to put the credentials AOCN® after my name. To me, if you didn’t know a nurse or recognize his or her institution, knowing that he or she had the credentials of AOCN® or OCN® behind his or her name meant that he or she possessed a body of knowledge associated with this field of practice which only adds to one’s ability to provide better care.”

Karen promotes certification through formal presentations at the Richmond Chapter of ONS, during educational in-services, and through informal peer-to-peer interactions. She teaches an annual OCN® review course, provides one-on-one peer tutoring for the OCN® test, and is an ONCC Certification

Detailed content outlines (test blueprints) are provided for each of the ONCC certification examinations, along with a list of the reference books used to reference all items on the examination. This information is sufficient for any nurse to develop a study plan to prepare for the examination.

Please be aware not to share or seek information about specific test items. It could result in never being able to use the credential after your name. Please also beware that it is your ethical obligation as a nurse to report this activity on the part of others.

Advocate. She is personally credited for increasing the number of certified nurses by more than 50% at her facility where she also instituted an annual recognition ceremony for certified nurses.

Karen continues to impact oncology nursing through her mentorship efforts. Whether she’s mentoring others in the avenue of certification or presenting at a national conference, Karen states “Sometimes it takes someone else to say to a nurse, you should think about becoming certified, or writing an article, or pursuing a particular project, or writing an abstract.” She readily participates in the professional development of her colleagues, a role that brings much personal satisfaction as well as recognition for the institution. Karen admits that oncology nursing impacts her greatly. She lives by the motto “Nothing ventured, nothing gained,” and tells us “If you don’t try to achieve something, how will you ever know if you could? Always try to go one step higher than you think you may be capable of. There may be times when you don’t achieve what you set out to do. Even in those times, however, there is always something positive that can be gained from the experience. And when you do achieve what you set out to do, you will be so glad that you did!”



Robin Stewart, RN, PhD, OCN®, OCN® and Vicki Norton, RN, BSN, OCN®



Karen Roesser, RN, MS, AOCN®, and Vicki Norton, RN, BSN, OCN®



Reader Shares Tips for Encouraging Professional Development

The summer issue of *Certification News* asked “How do you, as a formal or informal leader in your workplace, encourage professional development of nurses?” The following is a response to that question.

“I have found several ways to encourage professional development as an informal leader on the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit. As an ONCC Advocate, I compose and distribute e-mails reminding staff of upcoming ONCC test

registration deadlines and of review courses offered by the University of North Carolina (UNC) School of Nursing. I also maintain a bulletin board with this same information. For the past three years, to help celebrate Oncology Nursing Month, I have led the planning for a week-long Oncology Certification Celebration. During this week, we celebrate those nurses who achieved oncology nursing certification and encouraged others to take the test as well. Staff members received packets of information that

included ONCC test bulletins and brochures on the importance of oncology nursing certification. As a scheduling committee member, I make sure that staff members have adequate time off to complete continuing nursing education courses. Oncology nursing certification is a personal achievement that is recognized and valued at our institution.”

Angela Spruill, RN, BSN, OCN®
Clinical Nurse III
UNC Hospitals, NC Cancer Center

2011 Test Dates and Application Deadlines

OCN®, CBCN®, CPHON® Test Dates	Early-Bird Application Deadline (save \$100)	Final Application Deadline (full fee)
May 2–31, 2011	January 5, 2011	January 19, 2011
August 1–31, 2011	April 6, 2011	April 20, 2011
November 1–30, 2011	July 6, 2011	July 20, 2011

AOCNP® and AOCNS® tests are offered year round, from February–December. Applicants who are eligible to test will receive an Authorization to Test that provides a 90-day testing window. Candidates must test during the 90-day period. To ensure a 90-day testing window in 2011, candidates should apply by September 1, 2011. Candidates who apply after September 1 may have less than 90 days in which to test.

Readers Respond

“How do you respond when colleagues ask you specific information about the certification examination?”

E-mail your responses to oncc@ons.org.
Please include “Readers Respond” in your subject line.

ONCC Certification News Editorial Board

Janice Nuuhiwa, RN, MSN, APN/CNS, CPON®,
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Susan Bruce, RN, MSN, OCN®
Ashley Leak, RN, MSN, OCN®
Susan Wozniak, RN, MSN, OCN®

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ONCC Mission Statement

The mission of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation is to promote excellence in patient care and professional practice by validating specialized knowledge in oncology nursing and related specialties.

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)