



certification/news

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When More is Better - Why Nurses Hold Multiple Credentials

Theresa M. Gannon, BSN, RN, OCN®

Have you ever noticed an article byline, a name badge, or a presenter’s introduction where there were many letters after the person’s name – and wondered why and how they obtained so many credentials? I interviewed five certified nurses who hold multiple certifications to find out. They each have their own reasons for choosing certification, and strategies to master the challenges of maintaining multiple credentials.

Rebecca O’Shea, OCN®, AOCNS®, CBCN® Oncology CNS/Cancer Program Coordinator/Navigator at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Denton, Texas was in the group of nurses to take the first OCN® test in 1986. She went on to pursue two more certifications, because “it validates our specialty. The different certifications represent different achievements and bodies of knowledge.” She says the benefits are endless. “Certification has opened up so many opportunities for me. I was down-

sized twice and it was an investment in my career. In a competitive world, it’s a validation that sets you apart and it’s portable.”

Similarly, **Deborah Bolton, AOCNS®, AOCNP®**, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Oncology at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose, California says, “I feel certification affords me an edge whether I wear my CNS or NP cap – I have it with me.” Bolton obtained her first certification in the ‘80’s while working as an oncology CNS. She recalls her early days as an oncology staff RN, when OCN® certification wasn’t available. “We didn’t have many resources but the nurses forming the new specialty of oncology nursing had a lot of energy and were my mentors! I feel fortunate to have been around the groundswell – so many influential nurses willing to share their knowledge and resources.” She chose to use herself as a change agent and when certification became available it was a natural progression. “Internal drive is why I became certified. I wanted the credibility.

Nurses With Multiple ONCC Certifications		
Credential	Certified nurses who hold more than one ONCC credential	
OCN®	823	3%
CBCN®	396	49%
BMTCN™	351	51%
AOCNS®	123	29%
AOCNP®	105	8%
AOCN®	56	7%
CPON®	53	5%
CPHON®	51	3%

It was not expected by my employer to seek certification – there was no push. With certification you can market yourself differently, you can define yourself differently. I wanted to be the change and

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ONCC Election is Open: Who Will Get Your Vote?

ONCC’s Board of Directors Election opened November 10 – have you cast your vote yet? If not, take a few moments to consider why you should. The person who fills this role will help set policies that may affect your certification in the future.

One position on the Board is open for election. This position must be filled by a nurse who holds OCN® certification. Two candidate(s) have been slated by the ONCC Nominating Committee, including Nickolaus Escobedo, MSN, RN, OCN®, NE-BC and

Loretta (Lori) Williams, PhD, RN, APRN, OCN®, AOCN®. Each of these nurses would bring a unique blend of experience and perspective to the role. Read about the candidates and how they hope to serve you on page 3, then access your ballot and cast your vote. Here’s how it works.



If you were ONCC-certified as of October 25, 2015 the ONCC election administrator sent you an email on November 10. This message contains a direct link to your personal online ballot. If you didn’t receive it, watch your mail for a letter containing instructions on how to access your online ballot, or contact ONCC to have it resent. All voting must be completed online and the election will close on December 22. The results will be announced in early 2016.



Editor's Message

New Beginnings

Erica Fischer-Cartlidge, MSN, CNS, CBCN®, AOCNS®

Many see the fall as a time of endings; the end of summer, end of flowers or fresh green foliage, or for those in school (or with children in school) the end of break. For me, fall has always been my favorite season and a time of new beginnings; the start of a new school year, the beginning of the leaves changing and air crisp and a new year just a few months away. This was why it was not a surprise to me that this fall issue was full of new beginnings as well.

Within this issue you can read about the changes coming with certification exam development and administration. We intro-

duce four new Editorial Board members: Lisa Bjorkelo, MSN, RN, CPON®, BMTCN™; Lynn Czaplewski, MS, RN, ACNS-BC, CRNI, AOCNS®; Nicole Krist, MSN, CNS, AOCNS®, BMTCN™, OCN®; and Mohamad Younes, RN, BScN, CPHON®. Each new board member brings a wealth of knowledge and passion, which you will read as they introduce themselves to you throughout the next few issues. Pairing the skills and experiences of these members with our existing board members will allow us to explore exciting new article topics in coming issues, such as international issues in

oncology and certification, bone marrow transplant of both the pediatric and adult patient population, and so much more.

I was recently reminded of a quote by Plato, "The beginning is the most important part of the work." Wherever you may be in your journey to certification or in your career this could not be truer. So in honor of new beginnings, share this issue with a friend who may be unfamiliar with *Certification News*. We hope this issue inspires you to begin your own next adventure.



Leading By Example: Two Employers Achieve Coveted 100% Certification

Deirdre Young, BSN, OCN®, CBCN®

In the world of oncology, there are numerous accreditations that can be earned by physician practices and programs that serve to distinguish each entity as being one of value and quality. Whether it's recognition from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, Quality Oncology Program Initiative, Commission on Cancer or some other recognition, each serves the purpose of telling the public that quality care is a priority. For many institutions, another quality indicator in both the inpatient and outpatient setting is the number of registered nurses who are certified.

We would like to recognize two employers who have the distinction of having 100% of their nursing staff oncology certified. One hundred percent certification is a tremendous achievement, and one that deserves recognition and serves as an example for the rest of us who also have this as a goal. Many times it is the result of employer support and recognition, incentives, and mentors who work hard to prepare first-time applicants for the experience of "taking the boards".

Maryland Oncology Hematology, P.A. in the Aquilino Cancer Center in Rockville, Maryland, is an example of just such an

outstanding employer. Nicole Barnes, RN, OCN® is the Clinical Manager for this practice and recently shared some of the secrets to their success. Barnes takes responsibility for ensuring that staff find conferences or online programs to assist with certification preparation and maintenance. Additionally, those who are hired on the unit know there is an expectation that they become certified after their first year of employment. Once the nurses are certified, the practice offers financial resources to assist them in maintaining their certification and obtaining continuing education to use for renewal.

As manager and mentor, Barnes ensures that the nurses are recognized for their achievement. "We display a certificate in both offices' infusion suites. Our website also recognizes our nurses as committed oncology certified staff." A differential is provided for successful certification, with all test and renewal fees paid for by the practice. In addition, the nurses have an educational fund to attend oncology-specific conferences each year. Most importantly, these extraordinary nurses have the full support of their physician leaders. "Our physicians are very

supportive....[They] invest in our nurses' professional development by promoting certification. It shows that we are committed to providing quality care."

A second exemplar is found in Penn Highlands Healthcare at the Nathaniel D. Yingling MD Cancer Center in Clearfield, Pennsylvania. Tracey Sayers, RN, OCN® serves as the Clinical Supervisor of the Cancer center and has been with Penn Highlands Healthcare for 20 years in various roles prior to becoming a supervisor. When asked about whether any special strategies or campaigns were used to help generate excitement and enthusiasm among the nurses in order to become certified, she replied, "All of these nurses have been certified since 2008, one has been certified in oncology since 2007." She went on to share that the nurses in the infusion center were required to obtain certification within one year of being hired." Although there are currently no special incentives for obtaining or maintaining certification at this time, Penn Highlands DuBois does maintain a clinical ladder for registered nurses. This is a

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Meet the Candidates on the ONCC Ballot

The ONCC Board of Directors election is open. Learn about the candidates who are on the ballot by reviewing the information below. If you haven't voted yet, check your email for a message sent from the ONCC Election Coordinator on November 10—it contains a link to your personal online ballot. Be sure to vote by December 22, 2015.



Nickolaus Escobedo
MSN, RN, OCN®, NE-BC
Clinical Manager
Houston Methodist Hospital
Houston, TX

Leadership Experience:

- American Organization of Nurse Executives, Nurse Manager Fellow, 2015
- Review Course Presenter, Way Out West Chapter of ONS, 2013–2015
- Diagnostic and Therapeutic Council, Houston Methodist Hospital, 2015
- Nursing Leadership Council, Memorial Hermann Hospital, 2014–2015
- Nursing Peer Review Committee, Chair, Memorial Hermann Hospital-Memorial City, 2014
- Falls Initiative, Project Manager, Memorial Hermann Hospital-Memorial City, 2014
- Unit Based Shared Governance Committee, Chair, Memorial Hermann Hospital-TMC, 2012–2013

Escobedo's Candidate Statement:

Leaders in today's fast-paced and fluid healthcare environment must understand and adapt to many changes that continue to impact professional nursing practice and patient care. Leaders must respond to these changes and advocate that nurses demonstrate competency to fully participate in providing excellent patient care.

As oncology nurses, we interact with patients at one of the most difficult times in his or her healthcare journey. In my roles of clinical manager and adjunct nursing faculty I advocate for nurses to practice to the full extent of our profession while striving to deliver excellence in patient care. It is this continual drive for excellence that drew me to oncology nursing early in

my career and also fostered a need to seek professional certification as an oncology nurse. If elected to the ONCC board of directors I pledge to work diligently to instill this same drive for those seeking certification as well as promoting the overall vision of the ONCC to promote a consistent level of excellence in oncology nursing.

As a millennial, male nurse I understand the impact diversity has on the oncology nursing profession and how this value integrates into the mission and framework of ONCC to transform cancer care. I will continue to promote the high standards set forth by previous board members and maintain the commitment to validate the highly specialized nature of oncology nursing. As the ultimate advocate for certification in this role, I pledge to maintain and promote the advancement of certification in oncology nursing. As a board member, I will play an instrumental role in providing access to key information, education and test development to ensure the competency of the oncology nursing professional to practice and fully contribute as leaders and coordinators of care. This transformation will profoundly impact cancer care and help move us forward as we navigate the healthcare arena in the twenty-first century.

I strongly hope that you will consider me as your choice as the next member of the ONCC Board of Directors and I look forward to being your voice for cancer nursing.



Loretta (Lori) Williams
PhD, RN, APRN, OCN®,
AOCN®
Assistant Professor
University of Texas MD
Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, TX

Leadership Experience:

- AOCN® Test Development Committee, Member & Chair, ONCC, 1998-2003
- AOCN® Passing Score Task Force, ONCC, 1997-2000
- OCN® Test Development Committee, ONCC, 1994-1998
- Board of Directors, Director-at-Large, ONS, 2011-2014
- Evidence Based Practice Research Advi-

sory Panel, ONS, 2009 – Present

- Annual Congress Planning Team, Member & Chair, ONS, 2001-2003
- Patient Advocate Foundation, Executive Board of Directors, Member, 2012 - Present

Williams' Candidate Statement:

With many changes occurring in the healthcare environment today, this is a critical but exciting time for healthcare certification organizations. While changes are occurring to make healthcare more efficient and nursing roles are changing to meet these challenges, there also is an increased emphasis on quality for cost. This presents a tremendous opportunity for certification.

The members of the ONCC Board of Directors must provide visionary leadership to position ONCC to be one of the providers of quality metrics for oncology care.

In addition to understanding where certification and credentialing are needed and appropriate to indicate levels of knowledge and competence, ONCC must also prove with evidence that the certified or credentialed nurse truly provides better quality care that produces better quality and cost-effective patient outcomes than the non-certified or credentialed nurse.

My particular knowledge of measurement and research design, as well as my understanding of changes in healthcare due to my position with a patient advocacy organization, will allow me to help the ONCC Board to provide this visionary leadership.

A new reason to vote in the ONCC Election:

ONCC will donate \$1 to the ONS Foundation for each vote cast in the current Board of Directors election.

That means your vote will help to provide awards, grants and scholarships to oncology nurses.

Find out why on page 4.



Vote to Benefit the ONS Foundation

When you vote in the current ONCC Board of Directors election, your vote will count in more ways than one. This year, ONCC will donate \$1 to the ONS Foundation for every vote cast*. The Foundation will use these funds to support awards, grants and scholarships for oncology nurses – *regardless* of whether they are ONS members, or practice in adult or pediatric oncology.

Why did ONCC choose the ONS Foundation for this donation? ONCC’s mission is to promote excellence in patient care and professional practice by validating specialized knowledge in oncology nursing and related

specialties. Since 1981, the ONS Foundation has provided more than \$24 million dollars to thousands of oncology nurses through awards, grants, scholarships and educational initiatives. These funds have played a critical role in improving patient care and advancing the oncology nursing profession.

If you’re eligible, vote in the ONCC election. You’ll help to shape both the future of your certification and your profession. Learn more about the work of the ONS Foundation at www.onsfoundation.org.

**Up to \$5,000 contribution.*

Prometric to Administer ONCC Tests in 2016

ONCC has announced Prometric will deliver ONCC certification tests beginning in 2016. The first tests will be available February 1. This means that nurses who take an ONCC test in 2016 will do so at a Prometric test center, which is different from the location where colleagues may have taken an ONCC test in recent years.

Prometric is a trusted test development and delivery provider to more than 350 organizations worldwide. They offer a global network of test centers and use state-of-the-art technologies to securely deliver an average of 9 million exams per year to test candidates in a variety of fields. Prometric,

a subsidiary of Educational Testing Service (ETS), has more than 20 years of experience in providing test delivery solutions.

According to ONCC President, Marybeth Singer, MS, ANP-BC, AOCN®, “We are committed to providing ONCC test candidates with a high-quality examination, delivered in a fair and secure manner. We have the highest confidence that Prometric will offer our certification candidates an optimal testing experience.”

For information on the process used to select a test vendor, see the article, *A “Behind the Scenes” Look at Choosing a Testing Company* on page 6.

Leading By Example (continued)

voluntary process based on a points system to recognize the accomplishments of the nurses. Nurses who participate in the Clinical Ladder process obtain needed points for earning and maintaining specialty nursing certification. In addition, Penn Highlands Healthcare recognizes certified registered nurses annually during Nurse’s Week by holding an event to recognize all registered nurses who are certified in their specialty.

For both nursing supervisors at these outstanding facilities, there is a commonly held belief that certification in oncology nursing means that the nurse has taken additional steps to obtain specialty

knowledge in his or her field and to be the best nurse that he or she can be. Being certified shows that the nurse wants to provide the best possible care for patients and realizes that being educated is one step in this process. Overall, in both organizations, having 100% certification has resulted in the staff feeling more confident in each other as a team and recognizing that with this certification they have done something many centers have not been able to do. They take pride in themselves knowing that they have accomplished their goal. Congratulations to both great institutions for a job well done!

AMP to Provide Test Development and Assessment Services

ONCC has selected Applied Measurement Professionals Inc. (AMP) to provide test development services beginning in 2016. In addition, AMP will provide development and delivery solutions for the Individual Learning Needs Assessment (ILNA), ONCC’s continuing competence measurement tool.

AMP provides certification organizations, governmental agencies, professional associations and private industry with innovative measurement, assessment, and management solutions that focus on the appropriate application of technology and personal customer service. With more than 33 years of experience and 120 clients, AMP combines vast industry knowledge, effective technology and high quality customer service to provide unique program management solutions.

Marybeth Singer, MS, ANP-BC, AOCN®, ONCC President noted, “ONCC and AMP have long worked together on role delineation studies for certification. We’re confident that expanding our relationship to include test development, as well as assessment development and delivery, will provide our certification candidates with the highest quality tests and assessments.”

The AMP contract begins January 1, 2016.

Have an Authorization to Assess?

If you currently have an Authorization to Assess (ATA)—the information needed to take your Individual Learning Needs Assessment (ILNA)—you’ll want to know how it will be affected by the change to AMP for assessment delivery on January 1, 2016. Here’s how it will work:

If you have an ATA from PearsonVue you may use it to access your assessment through December 31, 2015. Beginning January 1, 2016, you will not be able to access your assessment with the current ATA because of the change in vendor to AMP.

In January 2016, ONCC and AMP will email a new ATA to nurses who are eligible to assess and who have not done so. This will enable those nurses to take the assessment through AMP.

If you have misplaced your ATA and would like to take the assessment before the end of 2015, contact ONCC.



Certified Nurses Ring the Bell

Erica Fischer-Carlidge, MSN, CNS, CBCN®, AOCNS®

On May 29, 2015 at exactly 4pm, the last business day of Oncology Nursing Month, the board of the New York City (NYC) Chapter of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) – all ONCC certified – rang the closing bell at the Nasdaq. This marked a first in ONS’s history and was well-timed with both the ONS 40th Anniversary and the 30th Anniversary of the NYC Chapter. The NYC Chapter is one of the largest chapters, with over 900 members, including 396 individuals who hold at least one of the oncology certifications. The honor of ringing the bell is reserved for companies whose stocks are publically traded; non-traded organizations can be called to participate in this prestigious event only if a cancellation occurs. Thanks to the diligent efforts of former ONS Public Relations Manager, Jeanette Kent (retired), this became a reality.

Past-president, Donna Curran, BSN, RN, OCN®, was contacted by Kent three years ago when the idea was first generated. Both worked hard to prepare for the unique opportunity. While the chapter did not receive a call the first two years they didn’t give up. Curran shared that she believes its important to be open to engage with your community in ways that you might not have thought traditional. With only 24-hours notice before the event and 30 minutes to finalize the list of attendees, the board enacted their ‘Nasdaq action plan’ to get in touch with everyone. While their ultimate hope was to get as many members of the chapter to join the board



Certified nurses from the ONS NYC Chapter board closed the stock exchange during Oncology Nursing Month.

in ringing the bell, it was challenging given the time constraints and many were unable to attend on short notice. The board, made up of oncology nurses from institutions across NYC, gathered to represent their more than 900 members.

Just prior to ringing the bell, current chapter president, Amanda Hughes, RN, OCN® made remarks honoring the more than 35,000 members of ONS as well as all those touched by cancer. The long awaited event, including a countdown accompanied by much fanfare, took place and a series of commemorative photos were taken. Those photos, accompanied by the ONS logo, were projected onto the Nasdaq tower for the 330,000 people who pass through Times Square every day to see.

Curran said of the experience, “Being able to share the mission of ONS through that forum with my NYC Chapter colleagues was amazing. It was also a great team building exercise and a fun way to connect with our NYC community.”

Nasdaq is home to more than 3,500 companies and was the creator of the first electronic stock market. It currently powers more than 70 marketplaces in 50 countries making the exposure for these oncology nurses huge. “This was a meaningful experience for me because I was felt that I was representing all the hardworking and dedicated oncology nurses within this amazing city.

It allowed the public to see that oncology nurses are devoted, strong and passionate people who will stop at nothing to bring awareness to oncology care,” said chapter secretary, Jaclyn Andronico, MSN, CNS, OCN®, AOCNS®. Getting involved in activities such as these provides free publicity for oncology nursing, local chapters, and cancer awareness. Director-at-large, Jeanine Gordon, MSN, RN, OCN®, agrees these non-traditional opportunities to connect with the community are essential. “It is important to raise awareness about cancer at every opportunity, especially in public and broad platforms. I’m hoping people saw oncology nurses ringing the bell and it served as a reminder to celebrate the cancer survivorship of a friend, schedule their overdue mammogram or colonoscopy, call a friend who is undergoing cancer treatment to offer support or remember a loved one who lost their battle to cancer. Cancer doesn’t discriminate and we should look to reach people wherever, whenever and however we can to raise awareness—that day it just happened to be at the NASDAQ.”

Advocates Share Benefits of Certification

Fourteen certified nurses recently joined the effort to promote the benefits of certification through the Oncology Nursing Certification Advocates Program (ONCAP). These nurses share how certification can benefit patients, nurses, and their employers. Join ONCC in welcoming these new program participants.

- Jaime Asci, Boston, MA
- Tina Cameron, Columbia, SC
- Anne Cloutier, Fort Myers, FL
- Erica Garcia-Frausto, San Antonio, TX
- Deborah Jett, Martinez, CA
- Megan Magill, Philadelphia, PA
- Ashley Mickiewicz, New Brunswick, NJ
- Sandra Olson, Banner, WY

- Benjamin Otoo, Woodbridge, VA
- Rachel Pry, Harrisburg, PA
- Mary Lou Simko, New Brunswick, NJ
- Eileen Sino, South Hempstead, NY
- Sheryl Riley, Warren, NJ
- Teresa Zawacki, South Lyon, MI

Learn more at <http://www.oncc.org/promote-certification>.



A “Behind-the-Scenes” Look at Choosing a Testing Vendor

Diane M. Otte, RN, MS, OCN® and Marybeth Singer, MS, ANP-BC, AOCN®

Whether things are going well or need improvement, it is best practice for all businesses and organizations to periodically examine whether to continue using the services of the same vendors over a long period of time. ONCC takes this obligation seriously, which includes a regular review of testing service vendors to be sure we are delivering the best services to certification candidates. There are many reasons to re-visit testing service contracts, including but not limited to the following:

- the development of new technologies that may be of benefit to certification candidates
- opportunity to reduce costs
- a need for new services
- a desire to renegotiate a current contract
- validation that a current vendor can continue to provide all of the services desired by ONCC.

In July, 2014 the ONCC Board of Directors (BOD) decided to do a Request for Proposal (RFP) to evaluate testing company options. This RFP included background information as well as all information requested from the testing company about the services they could/would provide. The RFP was very clear as to the details needed and also stated that ONCC may consider awarding separate contracts for the various services needed.

A small group of current Board members, as well as key ONCC staff, and a representative of one of the Test Development committees were appointed to the RFP Evaluation Team. A timeline for completing the process was created.

When the proposals were received, the ONCC staff completed an initial review to verify the requirements of the RFP were included in the responses provided by potential vendors. Once the review was complete, the proposals were made available to the RFP Evaluation Team. Each group member individually reviewed and scored the proposals against specific criteria. The team held conference calls throughout the process, and made site visits to potential vendors’ testing centers to assess the can-

didate experience. These site visits were very informative and evaluated the essential elements needed to deliver a secure test process, and provide a comfortable experience for the candidate. Convenient locations, parking, directions to the facility, signage, security during the check-in and testing process, as well as room layouts and accommodations for any special needs were evaluated by team members and volunteers who made the visits.

Three vendor finalists were selected and invited to meet with the RFP Evaluation Team at the ONCC national headquarters. During this time they presented their proposals and responded to questions from the group. It gave the team opportunities to meet key project team members from the various vendors and learn about their roles in providing exam development, flexibility with their software and in some cases, exam testing and analytics. The group then spent several hours together discussing and scoring the proposals, presentations and responses to questions. Additional information was also requested from the finalists as a result of the presentations. Once this information was received, another conference call was held and a final decision was made. All involved in the process were then notified about the decision.

Contracts have been signed and the transition process is well underway. In the end, the decision was made to contract with Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) for test development and assessment delivery, and Prometric for test administration. The new contracts begin in January 2016.

ONCC is committed to providing the highest quality services for our certified nurses and want to assure our current and future certified nurses that the entire process was thorough, thoughtful and will serve you well. As a certified nurse or certification candidate you can expect to receive the top-quality services that ONCC has always provided, including the development and delivery of fair and reli-

able examinations and assessments. It’s likely that most certified nurses will not be impacted by the vendor changes in any significant way. Test candidates may take the test in a different location than colleagues who tested in recent years, and nurses who are authorized to take the assessment will receive a new link for their assessment login.

As a certifying organization, we are committed to offering you the best experience and a user friendly process for initial testing and recertification for years to come.

ONCC RFP Evaluation Team

Here’s a look at the ONCC volunteers and staff who participated on the RFT Evaluation Team.

Volunteers

- Seth Eisenberg, RN, ADN, OCN®, BMTCN™- *Test Development Committee Chair*
- Lucy Licameli, RN, BSN, OCN® -*ONCC Board of Directors*
- Rebecca O’Shea, OCN®, AOCN®, CBCN®- *ONCC Vice President*
- Diane Otte, RN, MS, OCN®- *ONCC Secretary/Treasurer*
- Marybeth Singer, MS, ANP-BC, AOCN®- *ONCC President*

ONCC Staff

- Elisa Kahn, MSOL-*Director of Credentialing*
- Donna Kinzler, DNP, RN, AOCNP® - *Certification Programs Manager*
- Cynthia Miller Murphy, RN MSN CAE - *Executive Director*
- Annette Parry Bush, RN, BSN, MBA, OCN®- *Certification Programs Manager*
- Mary Wozny, BSBA - *Director of Operations*
- Abby Ytterberg, RN, CPHON®-*Certification Programs Manager*



Writers to Watch: Fours Nurses Join Certification News Editorial Board

Look for new faces and a fresh perspective in *Certification News*. Four certified nurses with widely different experiences in BMT, pediatrics, and international nursing will be sharing their viewpoint on a number of topics related to certification in future issues. Here's a quick look at who's come on board.

Nicole Krist, MSN, CNS, AOCNS®, BMTCN™, OCN®



I began working with Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) patients as a patient care tech while still in my BSN program and have continued to work with this patient population for over a decade. The world of BMT is constantly changing as we discover new treatments; patients who were not BMT candidates even five years ago are now candidates due to advances in the field. I always tell my patients I know they wish they never met me; not because I am a not a nice person, but rather because I know they wish they did not need my care. Patients often look to their nurse to help explain what the doctor has gone over. Education and emotional support is imperative in this population and this is when the role of the nurse as patient advocate, educator, and caregiver is most important. Nurses need to stay abreast of the constant changes in caring for a BMT patient. Signs and symptoms of sometimes life threatening complications need to be recognized by the nurse. The best way a nurse can do this is by engaging in lifelong learning when caring for the BMT patient population.

Last year was the inaugural year of the Blood & Marrow Transplant Certified Nurse (BMTCN™) certification offered by ONCC. I believe it is important for all nurses to become a clinical expert in caring for their specific patient population. Patients are living longer lives and we are seeing more patients who require a BMT. The world of oncology nursing is becoming very specialized. A great way to advance your education is by becoming certified and maintaining certification. As a Clinical

Nurse Specialist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York we transplanted about 400 patients in 2014 and have a staff of approximately 100 nurses who are dedicated to their care. I look forward to sharing my experiences as an advocate for BMTCN™ certification with you.

Lisa Bjorkelo MSN, RN, CPON®, BMTCN™



I am honored to join the ONCC Editorial Board. I've spent my entire thirty year nursing career in pediatric oncology and hematology as a staff nurse, both inpatient and outpatient. While I have been at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for 25 of those years, I have also worked at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles and Seattle Children's Hospital. My current role is as a staff nurse in outpatient oncology with a practice focus in telephone triage, hematology and day hospital patient care. I am active in staff education outside of the unit level and teach central line care for all new RN hires. I am the current President of the Greater Philadelphia Area Chapter of APHON and have been an APHON member for 10 years. The opportunity to network with nurses in other facilities and to share best practices is my favorite part of being a member.

As a new editorial board member, I wish to share strategies I have used to help nurses earn and maintain their certifications in a cost effective manner, such as how to implement free education lectures and obtain CEUs. I'm also interested in discussing the obstacles to certification that I've experienced with nurses in my institution and how we seek to overcome them. Our main challenge is that Oncology and Hematology are separate divisions and inpatient nurses practice in one area or the other. Only in the outpatient setting do oncology nurses care for some hematology patients. As the CPON® exam requires nurses to be knowledgeable in each discipline, our separate hematology and oncology nurses have an added challenge in obtaining certification. We have employed

some creative ways to approach this challenge and I look forward to sharing them with the readers.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and look forward to contributing to *Certification News*!

Mohamad Younes, RN, BScN, CPHON®



I am extremely delighted to join the board and be able to share what is happening in pediatric oncology and specialty certification at the international level. I've been a pediatric hematology oncology nurse for eight years and a CPON® since 2012. I started as a pediatric hematology oncology nurse at the American University of Beirut Medical Center in Lebanon, and then moved to King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Both hospitals are Magnet designated and are among the largest pediatric oncology programs in the Middle East. I was lucky that both of these institutions place high value on certification and have processes in place to assist those who take the extra step to get certified.

In future articles, I'd like to share on several topics including the Certified Nurses Week celebrations that are held at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and different techniques we have used to promote certification across the institution. Other hot topics I look forward to writing about include the certification exam phobias of international nurses and how they perceive certification. My hope is to broaden the understanding of how certification brings all oncology nurses together regardless of how far apart we may be geographically. While some of the challenges and barriers that are experienced abroad are unique, many are the same and I look forward to bringing solutions to these challenges to the readers of *Certification News*.

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When More is Better *continued*

[reflect] the way I wanted things to be, by positioning myself and living that value.”

Like Bolton, personal motivation was the driving force for **Anne Kolenic, OCN®, AOCNS®**. “Getting certified was a personal achievement and a professional goal for me. My hospital supported me, but it was me who wanted to do it.” Kolenic is a Staff Development Coordinator at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center in Cleveland, Ohio. She has been OCN® certified for a dozen years, and recently obtained her AOCNS® credential. “Holding certification is a personal accomplishment the nurse can be proud of, but it also demonstrates to the patients the level of care and expertise they will be provided,” she says. Kolenic sees certification as an excellent way to build a well-informed nurse who is prepared to provide the most comprehensive care to their patients.

Sameeya Ahmed-Winston, BMTCN™, CPHON® shares Kolenic’s view. She says, “Certification is an important designation for patients and families to see in the nurses who are caring for them.” Ahmed-Winston is employed with Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where she has been in the NP role for the last two and a half years, adding that all of her RN practice has been in BMT. “For me personally, certification is an accomplish-

ment I am proud of. It is security that I really know my stuff and certification validates that.”

For many nurses, certification prompts them to continue to ‘know their stuff’ by reading, keeping up, and directing their CE efforts. **Amy Bower, OCN®, AOCNS®, CBCN®**, a Breast Health Navigator at Holy Redeemer Health Systems in Meadbrook, Pennsylvania finds that to be true. She recognizes her patients and families frequent the internet and may or may not be getting credible information. “Once I learned about certification, I wanted to get certified to make sure I am giving the best evidence-based information to my patients,” she says. She has been an oncology nurse for 23 years and a nurse navigator for the past four years.

What she wishes were different involves renewal. Her employer will pay for the initial test, but there is no local support for CE or renewal fees. “No one is paying me to keep up my certifications,” she says, noting the CE and the renewal fees can add up to hundreds of dollars. She does it entirely on her own. Despite the cost, Bower always finds herself earning more CE than she needs at renewal time. “It helps that there is some overlap, for example, when the same points can be applied to both OCN® and CBCN® renewal.”

Ahmed-Winston appreciates the benefit of using some of the same points to renew multiple credentials, noting, “There is some overlap with both the CPHON® and BMTCN™ when submitting CE [for renewal points]. It takes time as well. Those are the challenges.”

O’Shea finds the challenge to keep multiple certifications current is minimal. “Since CE is a natural part of work, I plan to fit it in over an occasional lunch break or before or after work. I map it out for all my credentials and don’t wait until the last minute. I participate in satellite seminars at my workplace and [complete] a combination of online and journal CEs. I also attend conferences. ONS offers a variety of options including free CEs with membership. That can save time and money, too. I won’t do CE without a log tracker – that is a must!”

Bolton says maintaining organized records is paramount. She also finds that attending weekly tumor boards helps her obtain CE, noting that tumor boards must offer accredited CE or CME to be used for certification renewal.

What do these five nursing professionals have in common? A dedication to their patients, their vocation, and their passion to remain knowledgeable about the latest evidence-based practice – demonstrated by their commitment to certification.

Writers to Watch *continued*

Lynn Czaplowski, MS, RN, ACNS-BC, CRNI, AOCNS®



Certification has been an important part of my career pathway. I was certified as an OCN® for over 20 years and then, after earning a master’s degree, I became certified as an AOCNS®. All together, I have held nursing certifications for

close to 30 years. I am also certified as an Advanced Clinical Nurse Specialist–Board Certified (ACNS-BC) from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and as a Certified Registered Nurse of Infusion (CRNI) from the Infusion Nurses Cer-

tification Corporation. Currently I work at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as a clinical nurse specialist in the outpatient Cancer Center Day Hospital. Froedtert Hospital and Cancer Center is a Magnet-designated health care organization. In my role, I work with our staff in the administration of infusion therapies to complex patients with cancer. Providing up-to-date education related to oncology nursing care is a daily task. I also work as part of a multidisciplinary team to insure quality patient care. As an advocate for oncology certification, I co-facilitate and teach in our local chapter’s OCN® review course twice each year. Supporting nurses and encouraging them to be successful is an ongoing process.

Certification, to me, is a measure of nursing professionalism. It has been a major factor in my career advancement starting when I was a diploma nurse and up to achieving advanced practice status. I look forward to sharing my experiences and love of nursing in future issues of this newsletter. I would like to provide study tips and calendars that have helped me and others, and by providing examples how certification has made a difference in my career.

Watch for articles from these new writers in the next issue of *Certification News!*



2016 Test Registration Opens in December

Planning to take a certification test in 2016? Registration will open in December 2015 and testing will begin February 1, 2016. Unsure about when to apply? Here's some advice on the finding the right time for you.

Apply when you're about ready to test. You'll receive an Authorization to Test within a few weeks of applying, provided you're eligible to test and have submitted all required information. The ATT will open an almost-immediate 90-day testing window. You must schedule a test appointment and take the test during that 90-day period, so it's best to apply when you're ready to set up a test date.

Why you shouldn't put it off. Many test candidates take the test in the last few months of the year. If you apply late in the year, you may not have a full 90-day

testing window in which to schedule an appointment and take the test. It can also help with your test preparation to have a goal for when you plan to test. If you're deadline driven, having a test date in mind can help you plan your test prep to ensure your study time is completed before test day. For many of us, it's easy to put off activities that don't have a definite time frame assigned to them.

Whenever you decide to test, use the resources available to help you prepare: download the Test Candidate Handbook for your credential. It includes the Test Content Outline (also known as the Test Blueprint) and Reference List (list of resources used to reference the items you'll find on a test), as well as important policy information. You'll find the handbook on oncc.org/certifications.

Employers Recognized for Certified Nursing Staff

Sixteen institutions recently received an ONCC Employer Recognition Plaque for staffing their facilities with certified oncology nurses. These plaques are available to any patient care institution where a majority of the professional nurses are ONCC-certified. To apply for a plaque, please visit <http://www.oncc.org/promote-certification>.

- Allegheny Health Network Cancer Institute
Forbes, in Monroeville, PA
- Allegheny Health Network Cancer Institute
in New Castle, PA
- Columbia-St. Mary's, Ozaukee Medical
Oncology Clinic, Mequon, WI
- Columbia-St. Mary's, Water Tower Medical
Oncology, Mequon, WI
- Optim Oncology in Midwest City, OK
- Tulsa Cancer Institute, McAllister, OK
- Tulsa Cancer Institute, Stillwater, OK
- Tulsa Cancer Institute, Tulsas, OK

- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, BMT
Clinic, Dallas, TX
- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, BMT
Infusion Clinic, Dallas, TX
- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, Hema-
tology/Oncology Clinic, Dallas, TX
- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, Hema-
tology/Oncology Infusion Clinic, Dallas,
TX
- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, Fort
Worth, TX
- UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons
Comprehensive Cancer Center, Richardson,
TX
- VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System,
Infusion Clinic, Reno, NV
- Western Connecticut Health Network-
Danbury Hospital in Danbury, CT

Important Dates and Deadlines to Remember

Mark your calendar with these upcoming dates and deadlines related to certification.

December 1, 2015

Nominations due for OCN® of the Year, AOCN®/AOCNP®/AOCNS® of the Year, CBCN® of the Year, BMTCN™ of the Year, and Employer Recognition Awards.

March 31, 2016

Deadline to reinstate 2015 certification (for those who missed final renewal application deadline date)

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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.

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