

# Fellowship Program to Develop the Next Generation of Oncology Nurses

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An oncology nursing fellowship program for undergraduate nursing students has the potential to help develop a much-needed talent pool for the next generation of oncology nurses. By raising awareness of the value of this program, the Oncology Nursing Society can help foster expansion of this program nationally to help address the growing need for oncology nurses. Improving awareness about this program could lead to the establishment of similar fellowship programs at other cancer hospitals and undergraduate nursing schools. This program provides an opportunity for experienced oncology nurses to serve as preceptors and program managers at leading cancer hospitals, select and mentor program participants, and, ultimately, recruit and develop future mentors for the program.

## At a Glance

- Oncology nursing is a very specialized and important field that could benefit from more emphasis at the undergraduate education level.
- Leading cancer hospitals and undergraduate nursing schools can play a significant role in helping to develop the next generation of oncology nurses.
- The Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Fellowship is a model program with the potential to help address the need for more and better-prepared oncology nurses.

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Key words: oncology nursing training; oncology nursing development; oncology nursing fellowships  
Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/15.CJON.773-775

**M**y wonderful wife, Susan, lost her courageous battle with ovarian cancer in 2013. During our challenging journey together in the face of this terrible disease, we witnessed the invaluable work and incredible compassion of oncology nurses. In particular, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary care provided by Donna Coletti, MD, medical director of palliative care at Greenwich Hospital in Greenwich, CT, and Linda Kurfehs, BS, RN, and Judy Spangler, BS, RN, two outstanding hospice nurses. In Susan's loving memory, and as a tribute to the critical front line of cancer caregiv-

ers, I decided to do something proactive and impactful.

I was fortunate to learn about the Carol A. Ghiloni Oncology Nursing Student Nurse Fellowship program (Coakley & Ghiloni, 2009) at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, named in honor of a widely respected oncology nurse at MGH. At my first meeting with Carol in September 2013, it quickly became apparent that the unique and highly successful Ghiloni Oncology Nursing Student Nurse Fellowship was an ideal program to emulate. To learn as much as possible about this program and others (Childress

& Gorder, 2012) and to help ensure its sustainability, I agreed to sponsor its expansion at MGH from two to four fellows in 2014. As a result, I have been able to partner with MGH and closely collaborate with Carol on the development of a similar program.

With Carol's guidance, I established the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Fellowship Program ([www.sdfondp.com](http://www.sdfondp.com)) in 2014. Although originally intended as a one-person pilot program at Greenwich Hospital, it was met with such enthusiasm by the other hospitals and undergraduate nursing schools I contacted that I ended up sponsoring nine interns at four pilot program hospitals, including Greenwich Hospital; Stamford Hospital in Stamford, Connecticut; Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Massachusetts; and Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in Dover, New Hampshire. The initial fellows were competitively selected from Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts; Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut; and Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. Based on the success of these pilot programs, I expanded the program in 2015 to 24 fellows at nine cancer hospitals (in addition to my continuing co-sponsorship of the MGH program), and added several other top undergraduate nursing schools. Over time, I hope to expand this program nationally.

New hospital program partners in 2015 included New York Presbyterian Hospital; Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland; and Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Additional participating nursing schools include Molloy College in Rockville Centre, New