

Who We Are

The holiday season may seem different this year with recent searing memories of individual and community heartbreak. For many, the holidays may be tough, and this season in particular may be very tough. Let's pause to take that in and remind ourselves of who we are: master clinicians who care for patients with cancer and their family members; caregiving instructors; and those prepared to answer the call, serving humanity.

The suffering many have experienced during this period of storms and fires and violence is particularly wearying. And we all are witnesses to suffering from omnipresent media images and reporting. For anyone, it can be difficult to avoid relentless feelings of confusion, despair, or hopelessness.

What do we as oncology nurses bring to these times of chronic uncertainty and indescribable pain? We are those who are singularly prepared to help, who uncover peace or comfort when misery is present. We can provide that because we come from a vantage point of experience and education (Lacasse, 2013). We care for our patients and family members at times when they feel frightened. We know from taking care of patients what a journey it is to find or renew health and how challenging that road to recovery can be. We recognize the nuances of clinical data and how to find light when patients face darkness. We provide those in need with a singular combination of reliable information, tactical competence, emotional insight, and realistic clarity (Beaver et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014).

As members of a team, we collaborate with our fellow nurses, providers, and healthcare colleagues to bring coherence to an acute turn of events, a disjointed plan, or direction to a long road ahead. We have the ability to recognize resilience, demonstrate

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it, and teach it to a receptive patient, family member, care unit, institution, or community (Delgado, Upton, Ranse, Furness, & Foster, 2017; Heagele, 2017; Rishel, 2015).

As leaders out in the front of chaotic situations and stalled initiatives, we rely on our customized navigation systems, buoyed by contacts, networking, resources, and creative thinking. Our clinical decision-making skills establish priorities that filter out extraneous data so that we maneuver bedside and institutional systems and tackle the stuff that really matters. We are used to complicated care plans, too many acronyms, and layers of processes and double checks. But we get there, providing safe, timely and focused care.

So, with this brief holiday message reflecting on sobering times, I wish you and yours a meaningful season of celebration and renewal. As we have learned once again this year, our tomorrows are not guaranteed. But our todays usually are. And we, as skilled clinical oncology nurses, provide tangible comfort and comprehensive expertise.

Thank you for caring for patients and families, friends, and strangers. And let's not forget to care for one another.

Cancer is our focus, humanity our practice.



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