



A Day in the Life of Deborah Mayer, RN, MSN, AOCN®, FAAN

Editor's note. For this edition of "A Day in the Life," Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing Editor Joyce P. Griffin-Sobel, RN, PhD, AOCN®, APRN-BC, interviewed Deborah Mayer, RN, MSN, AOCN®, FAAN, about her professional experiences.

A Typical Day



Deborah Mayer, RN, MSN, AOCN®, FAAN, is a program manager at the Center on Child and Family Outcomes, Division of Clinical Care Research, at Tufts School

of Medicine in Boston, MA. On a typical day, she can be found working collaboratively with an interdisciplinary team on quality-of-life issues for children who have received hematopoietic stem cell transplants and their families. Her duties include writing grants, conducting focus groups and surveys, and developing Web-based interventions for families of patients with cancer.

Career Path

Clinically, Deborah has worked in oncology for most of her career. Her career trajectory to this point has included various roles and settings. Her first oncology role as a chemotherapy and clinical trials nurse was a Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm job. She then became a nurse practitioner and nurse manager of a research unit conducting phase I biologic trials. She has worked in Canada and Boston as an oncology clinical nurse specialist (CNS) and on the faculty at the Massachusetts General Institute of Health Professions and the University of Toronto in Canada. Eventually, she started her own business as an oncology nurse consultant, working with organizations and companies on projects to improve cancer care. She also

had a private practice, Cancer Counseling and Education Services, that counseled patients with cancer. Many of her CNS skills were applied in her business as she developed a business plan, marketing strategies, and a Web site. She later cofounded CancerSource.com, LLC, an Internet company focused on cancer, using her clinical knowledge to help design a Web site to meet patient and family needs and gaining business experience in the process. Each position she has held has built on her previous experiences, and all have one thing in common: Each directly or indirectly helped to further her mission of improving cancer care.

Involved in ONS since its inception in 1975, Deborah served as president from 1987–1989. She believes that her greatest accomplishment in the role was guiding the implementation of the strategic planning process. She currently is a doctoral candidate in the School of Nursing at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and is studying in an innovative distance program that is focused on cancer control. She earned a master's degree as a clinical specialist at Yale University in New Haven, CT, a bachelor's degree at Excelsior College in Albany, NY, a nurse practitioner certificate at the University of Maryland in College Park, and a diploma in nursing from the School of Nursing at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. She is originally from New Jersey, but Boston is her current home.

Deborah is active in many cancer organizations and is a prolific author. She has served as an associate editor for *Seminars in Oncology Nursing* since 1989. She also has received numerous awards throughout her career, including the ONS Excellence in Nursing Informatics Award in 1999, the Debba Flomenhoft Humanitarian Award from the American Physical Therapy Association in 1998, and the ONS/Roche Distinguished Service Award in 1992. In addition,

she gave the first quality-of-life lectureship at the ONS Fall Institute in 1991.

JGS: What have been the greatest challenges in your career?

DM: I often have been the first nurse to do something and felt a great responsibility to represent nursing in a way that others could follow with less resistance. For example, as the first nurse appointed to the National Cancer Institute's National Cancer Advisory Board, I felt that bringing a nursing perspective and patient focus to the table was important. In addition, I tried to encourage other nurses to participate on committees and review groups whenever possible.

As one way to improve cancer care, I have always focused my energy on ensuring that future patients with cancer benefit from the experiences of current patients. Sharing the knowledge gained from my clinical experiences has been the impetus behind my publications. By describing the care of one patient, working with students, influencing health policy, or conducting research, I feel one can exponentially impact the care of other patients with cancer.

JGS: Can you tell us what you are the most proud of in your career?

DM: My involvement with ONS throughout the years is one of my proudest. I have participated in many ONS activities, including acting as a treasurer, a president, and the editor of the ONS 25th anniversary supplement to the *Oncology Nursing Forum*, as well as serving on the ONS Congress committee and the ONS Foundation Board. Coauthoring the first ONS position paper on cancer rehabilitation in 1989 as a means to address survivorship issues is

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