

Taking Stock

As I sit to write this message, 2007 is only days away from being buried by the glitter and bubbles that will welcome 2008. 2007 has been a year like most, filled with the day-to-day minutiae of our lives, the unexpected surprises, the stunning events both good and bad, the losses, the gains, and the ever-present sense that time is moving much too quickly. In my role as editor, I am privileged to connect with a wide range of oncology-related folks and am bombarded with more information than it is possible to keep track of. I am struck by the common themes that tie our professional and personal lives together and find myself stopping to take stock out of a desire to feel some sense of control when we are dragged along by our lives rather than feeling as if we are running the show.

2007 was a banner year for the *Oncology Nursing Forum*. We have received about 160 manuscripts. In comparison, in 2004, we received 115 submissions. That number has climbed slowly each year, but this volume of papers represents a huge work load for our reviewers and our staff. Also in 2004, we received only 19 (17%) papers from authors outside the United States. In 2007, we received 44 (29%) papers from countries across the globe. In talking with other nurse editors, it is clear to me that this is a trend we will see continue. Publication of work done in non-English-speaking countries is a challenge at each step of the process. Language and culture differences must be surmounted. The research is often good but done at a more basic level than what we have become accustomed to in the United States. In addition, authors and editors are challenged to make connections between practices in a country such as Turkey and the healthcare system in the United States, and we struggle to find ways to ensure that information printed in our journals gets back to the nurses and healthcare providers in the country of origin. Globalization is here to stay however, and how we address it will continue to stimulate our thinking and planning.

How many times in the past year have we heard reports about our aging population, about how the baby boomers are poised to become a huge burden on the healthcare system as the leading edge of that cadre of citizens turns 60, about how the average age

of the nursing workforce is higher than 45 and even older for faculty in nursing schools? For some of us “of a certain age,” we are becoming increasingly aware of the subtle decreases in our stamina, the increases in our healthcare concerns both minor and major, and the losses of contemporaries and once

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vital family members and friends. We work hard to adjust and find that balance between staying active and involved and taking the time to enjoy the world around us. Of course it should have always been that way, but now there is an immediacy to our efforts that was not there before. Look for us to tackle these dilemmas in our publications and presentations.

The world changes at such a pace these days that our old patterns of strategic planning seem not to fit any longer. A few years ago, we made plans in five-year increments, then we started planning in three-year increments. Today it seems we barely have enough time to institute even one plan before our goals need to be revised. The burden on those whom we entrust with this work of planning for the future is substantial. We need to manage large volumes of data in such a way that the information is useful to us. We need models to facilitate 21st-century decision making. We need the right people at the table when ideas for the future are formulated, implemented, and evaluated. Our approaches to what we do and how we do it need to be fresh and sometimes very different. Task forces, project teams, think tanks, and boards of various shapes and sizes comprised of members and staff members have brought us to the successful place we are at today. Will those be the groups that will serve the association best in the future? What, if any,

adjustments to our traditional organizational culture will any changes we make entail, and how will we mitigate negative responses to necessary changes should they occur?

Not a day goes by it seems when the lay and professional literature fail to cover the pervasive nursing shortage. This time, the shortage will not fix itself. Each of us needs to contribute ideas and support the efforts to recruit young people to our profession. We need to convey the value, purpose, and fulfillment that caring for others can bring. Like any really good mentor, we need to socialize and nurture those new to nursing in ways that pass along the best of what we have learned and yet leave space for them to develop in their own ways with their own sense of professionalism. It is never easy to take risks nor is it to step back when the time comes. We all, novice and experienced, can learn from each other and we all can grow.

In the face of all this change, there remains the work that we do—we care for people with cancer. The treatments will change, progress will be made, and old ideas will give way to new approaches, but the needs of patients and families for knowledgeable, skilled, and caring professional nurses will only increase. Those elements at the core of the job we do every day, around the clock, will remain, and this journal will be there to help support those efforts by communicating research findings, promoting the exchange of ideas, and offering a variety of learning opportunities. Our goals, as always, are to increase our outreach to all levels of nurses and to provide compelling, appealing, accurate, timely, and readable nursing knowledge. These goals are bidirectional in nature, and we look forward to continuing the symbiotic relationships with our authors and readers.

I am not one to believe that a new year brings a fresh slate, a new beginning, an automatic improvement of the status quo; nevertheless, I think we can look forward with hope that 2008 will bring us more successes than failures, more good than bad, and more gains than losses. Bring on the new year and the new and old challenges, and watch us thrive.

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