

Leading the Way in the 21st Century

Have we all heard enough talk about leadership yet? I don't know about you, but my mental capacities have been oversaturated by all the presidential, senatorial, congressional, gubernatorial, and state and local elections. The election process brings to mind a picture of a leader in the traditional sense—a man or woman who wins the election, who is in charge, and who is the team leader. Real leadership is broader than that, however, and I challenge each of you to expand your views. In my opinion, there is no better example of leaders in action than nurses, at every level. Each nurse is a leader by virtue of education, job description, and professional status.

I am always amazed by the wide range of employment opportunities available to nurses. We are valued by healthcare-related enterprises such as pharmaceutical companies, health-related dot.coms, and civic institutions. Understanding why is easy. Nurses come with a set of personal and professional skills that easily translate into most types of jobs. We are educated, pragmatic, hard-working, responsible, clear-thinking problem solvers. The nursing process can be applied to just about any situation, and doing so is as natural to us as breathing. We have a great deal of power in such situations. If we learn to recognize that power and put it to good use, we can achieve just about anything.

The leadership we can provide takes many forms. How an individual nurse chooses to demonstrate leadership skills is a personal choice. Some will do it by get-

ting more education and achieving degrees and then teaching others. Some will conduct research and (my personal favorite) write for publication to contribute to our knowledge base. Others will lead by becoming administrators or managers who take responsibility for the smooth functioning of large work groups. Many will become clinical experts, modeling fine nursing care for all to see, including patients and families, physicians, allied healthcare workers, and other nurses. Still others will choose purposefully or by chance to have a more subtle influence by quietly dedicating themselves to being the best nurses they can be, exercising their leadership role in smaller but significant ways.

Once we accept the notion that each of us is a leader, developing or honing our leadership skills becomes a collective goal. The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and this journal are committed to fostering achievement of this goal and to supporting each nurse's leadership efforts, regardless of the leadership choice or style. Let me highlight a few examples.

ONS's Leadership Development Institute currently is shepherding two classes of fellows through a structured program. Part of completing the program involves developing and instituting a project. Watch our pages in upcoming months for some reports of their work. I hope the stories stimulate you to consider applying for a place at the institute when the next recruitment cycle arrives.

The Center for Leadership, Information and Research (CLIR) is now a reality and has many different projects under way, each with opportunities for participation and benefits. Some of the work resulting from CLIR projects will enrich future issues of this journal as we seek creative ways to share information about the work being done. We will begin with articles covering symptom management in the context of evidence-based care and use our supplement format to cover other topics.

Another way we will support your leadership development efforts is with a new feature making its debut in this issue. "Leadership and Professional Development" will have two distinct functions. First, the stories and content presented are designed to demonstrate some of the many possibilities for creative problem solving, care delivery, and personal and professional enrichment. Hopefully, as others recount their experiences, you will begin to incubate your own ideas and envision your own possibilities. Second, the feature will give each of you an outlet for expressing your own experiences—what you learned and how you grew—stretching your boundaries and discovering the leader within. When you are ready to share, just let us know.

I am confident that each ONS member's personal transformation as a leader will translate into helping ONS achieve its vision of transforming cancer care. Nurses will lead those efforts, and each of you can play a fundamental role in this process. —*ONS*