Uniting cancer nurses in pursuit of quality

The 30th anniversary of the European Oncology Nursing Society serves as a reminder of how staff can support each other in practice and education, says Carole Farrell

The European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS), which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, aims to develop and promote excellence in cancer nursing practice across Europe.

EONS was founded in 1984 as the Fellowship of European Oncology Nursing Societies with its headquarters at London’s Royal Marsden hospital - the natural choice of location for the first in a number of anniversary-related events. Last month’s event showcased EONS’s achievements, strength and geographical growth. The latest country to join was Palestine in February 2014, extending the society’s membership to 33 countries and 22,000 nurses.

The anniversary event was an exciting, joyful and inspiring celebration of all that is positive in cancer nursing. But it was also a reminder of the challenges that cancer nurses have faced on the road to achieving the clinical and strategic recognition previously awarded only to doctors.

Founding chair Rosette Poletti spoke of the need to create a society for cancer nurses to bring them together across Europe for the common goals of improving patient outcomes and ensuring nurses are well educated, well informed and competent. Although these aims remain fundamental to the work of the society, each president has brought an individual focus that has enhanced existing knowledge and the direction taken by EONS.

Awards and grants

For example, as president, Hans Stoll helped to develop the first European cancer nursing curriculum. Kathy Redmond boosted cancer nurses’ confidence by gaining them a voice in strategic decision making, previously dominated by doctors. Sultan Kav launched the Communication, Advocacy, Research, and Education (CARE) strategy to promote excellence in practice.

EONS also provides annual travel and research awards, which influence patient care. I won the first major research grant in 2008 to undertake a study exploring the effect of chemotherapy-related nausea as a complex symptom, and I was delighted to present the findings at the anniversary event. Lena Sharp won the grant in 2009, conducting a randomised controlled trial of two creams used in radiotherapy skin care, which resulted in evidence-based changes in practice and four publications. Alessandra Milani won a travel grant award in 2009, which enabled her to explore nurses’ use of the oncology nursing minimum data set.
As well as individual members, national cancer nursing societies can join EONS. This is an important step for staff in many countries, enabling consistent approaches to practice where possible, increasing collaboration and resources, and promoting education and research. At the event, Katarina Lokar from Slovenia highlighted how nurses in the country can ‘do more and better’ as EONS members, while Andreas Charalambous spoke of how membership gave nurses in Cyprus a ‘sense of belonging’.

Further events will be held throughout 2014 to extend celebrations to cancer nurses across member states, promoting their achievements and the work of EONS.

In this anniversary year, I invite you to join the society and raise the profile of cancer nursing in Europe and beyond.

Find out more at [www.cancernurse.eu](http://www.cancernurse.eu)

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