

Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Call for Collaboration in Oncology With PhD and DNP Colleagues to Improve Research

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To strengthen the field of oncology science, we must prioritize streamlined collaboration that fosters collegiality and maximizes the use of shared resources.

Collaboration between DNP-prepared nurse scientists and DNP-prepared nurse clinicians strengthens oncology science and can potentially improve patient-centered outcomes. The reduction in applications to PhD programs and subsequent shortage of PhD-prepared faculty is well documented and has caused alarm regarding the future of nurse scientists (Carter, 2024). The waning enrollment in PhD nursing programs has reached an almost 15% decline from 2013 to 2022 (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2024). Many within the nursing community associate the reduction in PhD program applicants with the rise in DNP program applications. Although DNP programs have grown exponentially since the first recognized DNP program in 1999, enrollment for DNP programs has also experienced a slowdown of growth (Carter, 2024). Annually, about 700–800 PhD-prepared nurses graduate from the 144 programs (AACN, 2023). With anticipated retirements, a circular issue of a shrinking number of PhD faculty will result in fewer graduates and, therefore, fewer PhD-prepared nurses actively in the field.

Grace Lee Boggs, author, social theorist, and activist, often challenged her students with the question, “What time is it on the clock of the world?” (Boggs, 2014; McFadden, 2015). In our current climate of high inflation, rising childcare costs, and the pressures of a demanding career with high burnout and attrition rates, nurses contemplating advanced education need a compelling reason and support to invest in a doctoral program. The intrinsic value of collaboration and contributing to the meaningful field of oncology science may urge those curious to take the plunge.

Healthcare organizations can benefit from the combined strengths of quality improvement initiatives and research-driven insights. These collaborations provide valuable data on the return on investment for essential programs like oncology nurse navigation and strategies to reduce emergency department visits and readmissions (Rodriguez et al., 2024). In addition, innovative approaches that enhance the patient experience, such as evidence-based practice interventions to promote health equity, are imperative for advancing oncology care (Fasaye et al., 2021). Collaborative efforts between PhD and DNP nurses also are crucial in addressing public health issues that affect cancer care, such as food insecurity and climate-related emergencies (Gany et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2020). Intentionally fostering sustained collaboration between DNP- and PhD-prepared oncology nurses strengthens current

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