Lessons From Our Leaders: Advancing Oncology Nursing Through the Power of the Group

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In the 1990s, when Lundgren became active in the national leadership of ONS, she served as a corresponding member of the Government Relations Committee. It was her first formal foray into politics and public policy. She was amazed at the size, influence, and sophistication of the organization and came to recognize the importance of ONS as a voice for oncology nursing, patients with cancer, and quality care.

As president, I was the physical face of all of these phenomenal nurses,” she said. When advocating on Capitol Hill to ensure nursing perspective on issues related to cancer care, she had the power of the group behind her. “Nurses are very powerful in that they’re viewed as authorities, people who know, and people who have answers,” Lundgren said.

“That’s a great burden, but it is also a gift because a nurse can choose to use that power to create positive change.”

The respect for oncology nurses, and for ONS as an organization, provides the base on which the organization’s political power rests. As healthcare professionals, oncology nurses know that decisions made by policy makers in Washington, DC, have an impact on their ability to deliver the highest possible level of care. One of the most important things that oncology nurses can do to ensure quality care is to influence the decisions. Over the years, ONS has developed position statements that delineate its stance on key issues (ONS, n.d.). ONS members can use the positions to support their messages when communicating with leadership about issues in their workplaces or with their local and national representatives. They have the power of the group and the organization behind them. Oncology nurses across the country participate in programs to influence policy.

• ONSStat: an ONS electronic grassroots advocacy network
• The ONS Capitol Gang: a group of ONS members who live in the greater Washington, DC, area and volunteer their time to assist ONS and its health policy associates with advocacy and public policy activities in the nation’s capitol