

A Research-Driven Life: Seeking and Developing a Nurse Scientist Role in the Rural Setting

Marilyn Frank-Stromborg, RN, EdD, JD, ANP, FAAN
2005 Oncology Nursing Society Distinguished Researcher Award

Dr. Frank-Stromborg's involvement with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) spans more than a quarter of a century. Her contributions to the organization have been significant as evident by the following trajectory. Her work in the areas of education and research has been creative and innovative. Her leadership has had an impact on many of the organization's activities and programs. ONS is very appreciative of her long-standing involvement and congratulates her on receiving the 2005 ONS Distinguished Researcher Award.

1978: Joined ONS
1979: Founding member of the ONS Research Committee
1983: Developed a research column in the *Oncology Nursing Forum* that focused on available instruments to measure phenomena relevant to the oncology population
1983–1985: ONS Research Committee chair
1984–1991: Principal investigator on a series of ONS/National Cancer Institute (NCI) grants to educate more than 500 minority nurses about cancer prevention and detection annually throughout the country
1985–1986: Director-at-large on the ONS Board of Directors
1985–1995: Codirector of the ONS/NCI Cancer Nursing Research Short Course
1986: Presented the ONS Foundation Mara Mogensen Flaherty Memorial Lectureship
1987–1988: Secretary on the ONS Board of Directors
1995–2000: Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) Research Committee Chair
2004: Member of ONS Task Force to develop the *Delegating Cancer Care Toolkit*
2003–2005: Represents ONCC as chair of the American Board of Nursing Specialties Research Committee

When I received word that I had been chosen for this award, my first thought was disbelief. Since the award first was given in 1992, I have marveled at the accomplishments of the recipients. I went back and reread the articles each recipient had written and was struck with the level of professionalism, scholarly productivity, and vision for nursing these nurse scientists exhibited throughout their careers. To be selected for the 14th Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Distinguished Research Award, supported by Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology, given the caliber, contributions, and impact on oncology nursing of the other awardees is indeed a humbling experience. I had doubts while preparing for this talk, thinking, “I’m not worthy.” Other awardees (Given, 1995; Grant, 1999) also have mentioned this feeling of not doing enough to deserve the award. This is especially true because my educational background, employment setting, and research activities

represent an entirely different nurse researcher model than has been spotlighted previously.

I obtained an EdD in educational psychology in 1974. As Lillian Nail, RN, PhD, pointed out in her Distinguished Researcher Award presentation (Nail, 2002), the first generation of oncology nurse scientists obtained their doctoral degrees in disciplines other than nursing in the early 1970s. All of the past recipients of the award have been nurse scientists in large academic settings or freestanding oncology clinical settings, such as the City of Hope and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. In contrast, I have spent the past 28 years employed at Northern Illinois University (NIU) in DeKalb, a public, non–research-intensive state university. I was a professor in the School of Nursing at NIU that had a master’s program consisting of three clinical specialty tracks and no doctoral program. For many years during my employment as a professor, there were limited resources or role models for nursing faculty desiring to conduct research in non–research-intensive academic settings (Waugaman & Schneiderman, 2004). Another significant difference is that the largest hospital in our county is only 100 beds. Until recently, our county had no oncologist or oncology treatment, and the nearest comprehensive cancer center was approximately an hour away. The previous award recipients all have developed research programs that are narrowly focused on behavioral oncology research, symptom management, or outcome indicators such as Mock’s investigation of fatigue (Mock, 2003), Dodd’s self-care research (Dodd, 1997), Ferrell’s quality-of-life work (Ferrell, 1996), and Miaskowski’s pain management investigations (Miaskowski, 2000). In contrast, my research program of oncology studies is much broader in scope and has encompassed a multiplicity of areas.

The focus of this article is an overview of the research activities I have participated in during the past 30 years. What I hope to accomplish is to share with you how a research career can be shaped outside major academic or medical centers that



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