

In Memoriam

Rose Mary Carroll-Johnson, RN, MN, passed away on February 21, 2011, surrounded by family and dear friends. Rose Mary put up a long and strong fight against her cancer, a disease that she also fought on the professional front. For her many Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) colleagues, this is sad news. In 2011, Rose Mary celebrated her 20th year as editor of the *Oncology Nursing Forum*. She was also one of the founding members of ONS. For her professional and personal friendship, we all are grateful. She will be missed in so many ways.

No arrangements had been finalized at the time this issue of the *Oncology Nursing Forum* went to press. Further plans will be announced on Rose Mary's CaringBridge site (www.caringbridge.org/visit/rosemarycarrolljohnson) and on the ONS Web site as they become available. The *Oncology Nursing Forum* will honor Rose Mary's contributions and celebrate her life in the May issue.



Statistics. Get It?

When this issue of the *Oncology Nursing Forum* (ONF) arrived in your mail, did you look through the table of contents for research articles that relate to your clinical practice or did you put it aside because you're not interested in nursing research? If you're reading this editorial, I'll assume that you did open the journal and at least got this far! Years ago, when I decided to obtain an advanced degree in oncology nursing, I was looking over the course requirements and right there on the first page, it jumped out at me: statistics. "Ugh," I thought. "I know I'm going to hate statistics! It's math on steroids." I not only survived statistics but learned advanced concepts of statistical analysis well enough to enjoy working through the analysis of a research article.

So, what's not to love? Often, when I'm visiting nurses in clients' offices and facilities, I talk about the benefits of being a member of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and usually give away my extra copies of *ONF*. The reactions are always the same: The articles are too full of statistics and difficult to read; some read Clinical Challenges, People and Events, and the Editorial but feel the rest does not relate to daily practice; or the statistics make the article confusing rather than helpful. The 2009 *ONF* reader survey mirrored those statements, with some respondents stat-

ing similar concerns about reading and using the research articles. And every year, the *ONF* Editorial Board members discuss how to encourage nurses of all levels of educational preparedness to see *ONF* as a useful resource. The board

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would like to change the minds of the 6.09% (n = 525) of ONS members who stated they rarely or never read *ONF* (ONS, 2010).

Nursing depends on evidence to guide practice. The use of sound statistical analysis is the basis of evidence-based practice, but that doesn't mean the conclusions in a published report containing page after page of statistics are statistically sound. Being able to judge the appropriate statistical tests and whether the statistics prove—or disprove—the hypothesis takes some practice. Let's all agree on one thing: Some of the names of these statistical tests are just plain odd and don't explain what it is they evaluate. What did Bonferroni need to correct in the Bonferroni Correction? Who is Wilcoxon? What's a Fisher's test?

A Cronbach alpha? How do you even begin to understand?

Pick one research article from an issue of *ONF* on a topic that is of clinical interest to you. Read it through for content, then reread each section in detail. If you can, read it in front of a computer so you can look up unfamiliar statistical terminology. Make notes in the margins. After you finish, figure out why a certain statistical test or method was used and try to put the findings in context. Don't despair! It will take more than one venture into hunting down statistics to make you comfortable reading research reports.

Overcome your fear of statistics! Attend a journal club. In most issues of *ONF*, a research article is designated for use in a journal club and contains questions to guide discussion; among those questions, you'll often find issues about the statistical analysis presented in the article. Invite an advanced practice nurse or nursing faculty member to attend your journal club and facilitate a discussion about the statistics used by the author(s). If you don't have a journal club at your facility, start one! ONS has an excellent guide for creating a journal club for oncology nurses, available for free PDF download, at www.ons.org/Publications/VJC/Guide. You also can participate in an online journal club by choosing an *ONF* journal club article and attending a virtual journal club session.

More information and a schedule of sessions are available at www.ons.org/Publications/VJC.

Take an introductory class in statistics at a community college or online. The U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, hosts a Web site with an online course in basic health statistics. Although not specific to oncology, the statistical principles are the same and the Web site includes exercises to practice your learning. Take a look at www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/usestats/index.htm.

Statistics help nurses validate interventions, plan budgets, determine the best plan of care for a specific patient population, and support a multitude of other activities. If you think statistics are irrelevant, here are some stats from the National Cancer Institute that might affect how you envision your job as an oncology nurse in 2011 and beyond.

- In 2010 and 2020, an estimated 13.8 and 18.1 million people, respectively, will be cancer survivors.
- Associated costs of cancer care will be \$124.57 and \$157.8 billion (2010 U.S. dollars) in 2010 and 2020, respectively.

- Medical costs will increase 27%, reflecting the aging of the U.S. population.
- The largest increases were in the continuing phase of care for prostate cancer (42%) and female breast cancer (32%) (Mariotto, Yabroff, Shao, Feuer, & Brown, 2011).

How do you measure up against these general nursing statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (2010)?

- There are 3,063,162 licensed RNs in the United States.
- The average age of an RN in the United States is 46 years.
- More than half of RNs work at least 40 hours per week in their principal nursing position, and another 24.2% work 32–39 hours per week.

Join the ranks of regular *ONF* readers and learn from your nurse researcher colleagues! If you already read *ONF* regularly, share your interest with a colleague who is struggling with complex articles or consider starting a journal club at your site. When I visit your facility or see you at Congress, I'd love

to hear you say, "I read the research articles in every *ONF* issue—and I'm beginning to get it!"

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/11.ONF.105-106

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