



## Oncology Nursing Society

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# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Oncology Nursing Society and Association of Oncology Social Workers Hold Patient Navigation Think Tank**

PITTSBURGH, PA – August 20, 2009 – The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and the Association of Oncology Social Workers (AOSW) held a joint patient navigation think tank on June 26 and 27, 2009, at the ONS National Office in Pittsburgh, PA.

Collectively, the group strategically looked at the role of patient navigation and determined what the members of both societies needed in reference to this emerging new professional role. Additionally, each organization held individual sessions to address the specific needs of oncology nurses and social workers in support of the patient navigation role.

Pamela “P.J.” Haylock, PhD, RN, representing ONS, and Pam Murph, LSCW, representing AOSW, were co-chairs of the joint patient navigation think tank.

“The idea of patient navigation has emerged over the past decade or so, in response to the needs of diverse populations and communities, the complexity of cancer management strategies, and the inclusion of numerous disciplines in what we consider to be quality cancer care,” said P.J. Haylock, commenting on the pressing need for the think tank. “Patients and families can easily misinterpret information provided, have difficulty getting to the right place at the right time, and, sometimes, may fall through the cracks in our cancer care systems. Navigators are guides, supporters, and communicators, who work to smooth the pathways for patients and families as they face the challenges that go with cancer diagnoses. Still, potential problems exist because the navigator role is carried out differently in each setting, and nurse

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and social worker navigators are asking for some consistency in job descriptions, educational preparation, and necessary skills and experience, and guidance with regard to assessing the outcomes of their roles.”

“Patient navigation as a verb, which includes the actual work, is intrinsic to social work and nursing as a whole, and patient navigation processes are a necessary component of cancer care,” said Pam Murph, co-chair of the patient navigation think tank. “The issue for many has been in defining the role of patient navigation, especially with so many patient navigation programs being put into place across the country. The challenge, not just for our respective members, but for all those involved in cancer care, is how to integrate these programs into work that we do in order to ensure best outcomes for all. The need for a consensus in regards to patient navigation is paramount as we move forward—for healthcare professionals and consumers of care.”

Along with Haylock, representation from ONS included President-elect Carlton Brown, PhD, RN, AOCN<sup>®</sup>, from Lewes, DE; Cynthia Cantril, RN, MPH, OCN<sup>®</sup>, from Greenbrae, CA; Angelina Esparza, RN, BA, BSN, from Atlanta, GA; Theresa Koettters, RN, MS, from San Mateo, CA; Diane McElwain, RN, MEd, OCN<sup>®</sup>, from York, PA; Jean Sellers, RN, MSN, OCN<sup>®</sup>, from Chapel Hill, NC; and Deborah Walker, DNP, FN-BC, AOCN<sup>®</sup>, from Birmingham, AL.

Along with Murph, representation from AOSW included Linda Glaudell, LCSW, from Milwaukee, WI; Nina Miller, MSW, OSW-C, from Chicago, IL; Karyn Walsh, ACSW, LCSW, from Washington, DC; and Mary Weiss, LCSW, from Chicago, IL.

ONS Chief Executive Officer Paula Rieger, RN, MSN, FAAN, and ONS Executive Director, Corporate Support and Partnerships, Michele McCorkle, RN, MSN, aided the group in their efforts, and ONS Director of Education, Michele Galioto, RN, MSN, and Corporate Relations Manager Jan Kinzler participated as well.

Collective plans and individual courses of action will be submitted to each of the organizations’ Board of Directors for review and approval.

ONS is a professional organization of more than 37,000 registered nurses and other healthcare professionals committed to excellence in oncology nursing and to leading the transformation of cancer care by initiating and actively supporting educational, legislative, and public awareness efforts to improve the care of people with cancer. ONS provides nurses and healthcare professionals with access to the highest quality educational programs, cancer care resources, research opportunities, and networks for peer support. Learn more at [www.ons.org](http://www.ons.org).

The Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW) is a non-profit, international, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to the enhancement of psychosocial services to people with cancer and their families. Created in 1984 by social workers interested in oncology and by existing national cancer organizations, AOWS has over 1,000 current members who embrace the AOSW Mission “to advance excellence in the psychosocial care of persons with cancer, their families, and caregivers through networking, education, advocacy, research and resource development.” Learn more at [www.aosw.org](http://www.aosw.org).