

**Position: Director-at-Large**

Valerie Burger, RN, MA, MS, OCN®, CPN  
Assistant Vice President Cancer Services  
Northwell Health  
Bellmore, NY

**ONS member:** 27 years;

**Education:**

1998 - Post Masters Certificate - Holistic Nursing, College of New Rochelle  
1995 - Master of Science - Health Care Management, New York University  
1995 - Master of Arts - Delivery of Nursing Service, New York University  
1987 - Bachelor of Science - Nursing, Boston University

**ONS Participation (national and local):**

2001- 2002 - Secretary, Queens/ Long Island Chapter ONS; responsible for minutes and communication of chapter activities.  
2003 - End of program, Chemotherapy/ Biotherapy instructor; one of three qualified instructors responsible for maintaining the integrity of the ONS chemo/bio course and educating staff for North Shore LIJ Health System before the program moved online.  
2005-2008 - Oncology Nursing Forum (ONF), Associate Editor, Product Updates; write and organize the bimonthly column for ONF.  
2005 - Current, Expert reviewer for both CJON and ONF; review and critique articles submitted for publication in our organization's journals.  
2011-2012 - Oncology Nursing Forum, Book Reviewer, Knowledge Central; write reviews for column regarding current publications.  
2011-2014 - Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON), Associate Editor, Supportive Care; provide guidance and support to authors writing for the supportive Care feature in the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing.

**Work Related Skills and Leadership:**

2012-Present - Assistant Vice President of Cancer Services; Functioning in a large health system I am responsible for program development and communication between multiple departments, physicians, service lines and facilities. I also bridge many community groups as we grow our cancer services and strive to meet the needs of the varied communities we serve.

2017- Present - Lead - Oncology Nursing Fellowship; Serve as the lead to develop and implement a system wide education program for nurses new to oncology providing them with an opportunity to rotate through all aspects of cancer care offered in our system and to be educated using ONS standards and education courses.

2019 - Lead Nurse Residency Program; From the success of the Oncology Nursing Fellowship I have had the privilege to become an architect of our system wide nurse residency program - encompassing 16 hospitals with over 200 new registered nurses participating in our first cohort. My role involves greeting every new nurse and

coordinating standardized education across our health system. I organize the site coordinator meetings and provide guidance to the leaders at each site.

**Health Care/ Cancer Organizations Experience:**

2019 – present - American Cancer Society; Regional Board Member. Participate in regional planning of the ACS mission, advocacy and fundraising platform.

2019- present - Monday's at Racine, Islip, New York; Board of Directors. Guide grassroots organization that provides free salon and spa services to men and women with cancer throughout the New York area. The program is currently in place at 14 salons.

2017-present - American Cancer Society; Chair - Board of Directors. Lead board meetings, set agendas and facilitate the mission, advocacy and fundraising for the Long Island area of the ACS.

2017-present - Women and Men Against Prostate Cancer, West Islip, New York; Advisory Board - provide leadership and medical /nursing guidance for community prostate cancer organization.

2015-present - Islip Breast Cancer Coalition; Advisory Board - provide leadership and medical /nursing guidance for community breast cancer organization.

**Additional non-nursing leadership experience relevant to this role. (Community volunteer, etc.)**

2013-2016 - Boy Scout Troop 284, Committee Chair. Responsible for communicating and organizing the parents of the Boy Scout Troop around activities and support of the troop. Negotiating between sponsoring organization and troop leaders.

2013-2018 - Boy Scout Merit Badge Counselor. Provide guidance and education to young men advancing through ranks of the Boy Scouts including several Eagle rank required badges.

2000-2004 - Giant Step Cooperative Nursery School, President, oversee budgeting, membership, hiring and communication with member families of a cooperatively, parent run, nursery school.

**Share how your leadership qualities, professional and personal experiences make you qualified for the ONS Board.**

With over 29 years of oncology experience I have had the privilege to work in almost every health care setting caring for people with cancer. My career started in pediatric oncology and moved to adult care. I have been a nurse in academic settings, caring for clinical trial patients and I have been a nurse in a community hospital caring for suburban residents close to their homes. I have been a visiting nurse with hospice and a nursing educator in both academia and hospitals. In my roles as staff nurse or manager or now assistant vice president, I have had the honor to care for people and partner with them, and their care team, in planning against an illness which takes away too much from people. Quality cancer care is not optional in any setting. With my varied background, I bring an understanding of each setting and its unique challenges for both staff and patients. How we innovate, advocate and excel is only limited by our

imagination and our professional organization, ONS, allows us to be leaders in our field if only we allow ourselves to dare to imagine the transformation in care we want to see.

**How have you advanced excellence in oncology nursing and quality cancer care?**

Excellent nursing care provides for quality patient care. In my role as hospital educator I have had my most profound experience with personal impact on excellence.

Providing a foundation of excellence and inquiry for new nurses, either as a preceptor or as a chemotherapy/biotherapy instructor, has always filled me with a strong sense of obligation. I believe in oncology we understand this more thoroughly than in any other service line. The care we provide and the medications and treatments we dispense are so impactful on our patient's lives that we have no recourse but to be aware of its effect and demand excellence. So many exemplars come from nurses caring for patients with cancer. Through education we provide the foundation for nursing practice. Through education we inform advocacy and teach our patients to care for themselves. Through our mission we teach people to care for themselves in the arena of prevention and treatment. Quality care is also achieved through standardization and metrics. I have been a strong proponent of standardizing policies and procedures throughout my health system in order to be able to measure our outcomes.

**How have you demonstrated innovation in oncology nursing?**

Critical care and cardiac care have long been proponents of specialized nursing care and education. Within my health system we developed and created a fellowship for oncology nurses. I run and organize this fellowship for any nurse in our health system who is new to oncology nursing. The 16 week program incorporates education, simulation and a clinical rotation to any site a cancer patient may visit. The feedback from this program has indicated that we are equipping our new nurses with tools they would have otherwise taken much longer to develop. Repeatedly, I have heard how their experience in the fellowship has allowed them to educate and interact with a patient in a more prepared way. This seemingly simple innovation, of exposure and education, has created a sense of confidence and excellence in our new staff.

Providing them with connection to expert clinicians in their onboarding process allows them to access experts when needed and transform themselves as well as the care they give.

**How have you demonstrated advocacy for patients with cancer?**

There are many organizations that make advocacy their mission. The American Cancer Society (ACS) makes advocacy easy. I am a member of the Cancer Action Network, an arm of the ACS. Through emails we are notified of issues being brought to our government officials and we are given the opportunity to weigh in and have our voice heard. When I receive these emails I spread them to my colleagues and ask them to raise their voices as well. Through this cascading of information I reach over 100 people from just one email. From cancer research funding, to improving quality of life, to e-cigarette bans, to restoring funding for state cancer screening, there is much to advocate for. It is imperative as educated health care providers that we raise our voice to improve the health of the communities we serve. Another way I advocate is through

accreditation of my facilities. By meeting standards of excellence and receiving national recognition we measure and meet evidence based guidelines which in turn provides for excellent care. This further opens our services for funding and programming to provide better care to our communities.