

# ONS Past President Johnson's Legacy Leaves Impact on Global Cancer Community

**A**s an oncology nursing trailblazer, Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Past President Judi L. Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN, dedicated her career to guiding cancer education, patient-centered care, and oncology nursing excellence. On Saturday, April 20, 2024, Johnson passed away, leaving a far-reaching legacy on the profession and patients around the world. She was devoted to advancing the field both in the United States and abroad, and her vast contributions to ONS helped guide the Society's creation of its first chemotherapy guidelines used in oncology nursing practice.

"It is impressive to recount ONS's record of achievements, activities, and events. The diversity and growth of our membership has given cancer nursing viability, visibility, and permanence. In our life together as a nursing organization, we have truly reached a milestone," Johnson said in an address for the Society's 10th anniversary.

Johnson joined ONS in 1979. After attending her first ONS Congress®, Johnson became actively involved in the Society, sharing her expertise as a member of several committees, including the Education Committee from 1980 to 1982 and Research Committee from 1982 to 1983. From 1981 to 1983, she served as a director-at-large on the ONS Board of Directors before being elected president from 1983 to 1987.

During her tenure as ONS president, the first ONS-created cancer chemotherapy guidelines were published: *Cancer Chemotherapy Guidelines and Recommendations for Nursing Education and Practice* (which is now in its second edition) (ONS, n.d.-a). Johnson's presidency also oversaw the founding of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, administering the first OCN® examinations with 1,384 nurses passing. Johnson also helped develop ONS's first strategic planning work, began the *ONS News* publication (which later evolved into *ONS Voice*) (ONS, n.d.-b), and guided the Society's efforts in cancer prevention by receiving a National Cancer Institute grant to sponsor the first workshop on cancer prevention and early detection in Black Americans.

At the time, ONS was also focused on international involvement in global nursing and became a full member of the

International Union Against Cancer. Her work in global nursing continued after her presidency. Johnson joined ONS's International Task Force from 1992 to 1993, attending conferences around the world to collaborate with nurses and healthcare professionals from different countries—including the former USSR.

"The greatest insight I gained from the international conferences and a medical tour of the USSR is that although our approaches to health care may vary due to cultural and religious differences, support services, and allocation of resources, we do share a strong commitment to improving cancer nursing worldwide," Johnson said. "In a growing number of countries, cancer nurses are striving to become a formally organized body of professionals. As an organization, we can serve as a catalyst for this development. This trend bodes well for the future strength and vitality of cancer nursing internationally."

## Achievements in Transforming Care

Working at North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, for nearly 40 years, Johnson made a lasting impact on her patients and colleagues, receiving the university's Outstanding Achievement Award in 2018 (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2018). She co-developed the I Can Cope patient education campaign to help patients understand their illnesses (Johnson & Klein, 1988). She founded HealthQuest, an organization dedicated to empowering patients living with life-changing illnesses like cancer. Johnson was a founding member of the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer and was a key consultant in establishing the Asian Pacific Oncology Nursing Society. Johnson also served as the founding editor of the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Oncology Nursing*.

Her legacy of oncology nursing leadership and support for patients with cancer transformed the oncology nursing profession. Johnson's experience, expertise, and voice helped to advance

