

ONS Publishing Division Policy Regarding Letters to the Editor: Selection of letters to be published in Letters to the Editor is the decision of the editor. For acceptance, letters must be signed. A letter can appear anonymously if requested by the author. All letters are subject to editing.

A letter that questions, criticizes, or responds to a previously published *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing* article automatically will be sent to the author of that article for a reply. This type of collegial exchange is encouraged. Letters that question, criticize, or respond to an Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) policy, product, or activity will appear in *ONS Connect* and automatically will be sent to the ONS Board of Directors for a reply. Send letters to CJNEditor@ons.org.

Student, Wife, Mother Believes E-Learning Will Ease Shortage

I read with great interest the article titled, “Distance Education: One Solution to the Nursing Shortage?” (Talbert, 2009). I appreciate the author’s focus on our national nursing shortage and how distance education may help. I am a full-time nursing student, wife, and mother. I often struggle to balance my family and academic responsibilities. Meeting the demands of in-class participation can produce a loss of family time and a childcare financial burden. As well, nurse educators may detour from teaching because of the time demand of in-class participation. Donelan, Buerhaus, Desroches, Dittus, and Dutwin (2008) reported time, commitment, and financial and educational requirements as deterrents for individuals considering nursing as a career. It is unfortunate that burdens such as these may prevent individuals from entering the rewarding career of nursing. Hopefully, distance education can offer some relief.

The benefits presented regarding distance education are encouraging to students and nurse educators. Talbert addressed flexibility, the elimination of commuting, and self-discipline. I agree passionately that the flexibility offered through distance education is beneficial to students. For students and nurse educators, the availability of 24-hour e-classrooms could be what allows them to continue their education or teaching careers. Less commuting may allow more time for academics, work, and family, as well as relief from the financial burden of childcare or transportation costs. As a central goal in nursing, any self-discipline skills acquired from distance learning are valuable.

I was very pleased to see that, in addition to benefits, the article also presented

considerations that should be addressed before distance education. The encouragement to consider self-discipline, motivation, properly accredited classes, and computer access was descriptive and understandable. I also agree that these considerations are imperative before starting a new curriculum. The article also offered online references for individuals seeking programs offering distance learning and self-evaluations. These suggestions provided a very unbiased and informative perspective for readers.

The curriculum for nursing students can become overwhelming. I hope that more distance-education programs are made available to assist individuals in achieving their nursing careers. I found this article beneficial to nursing practice and value the balanced presentation of information provided. I would like to thank the author for providing such an interesting, thought-provoking, and informative article.

Rebecca McMabon

Student Nurse

Saint Anthony College of Nursing
Rockford, IL

References

- Donelan, K., Buerhaus, P., Desroches, C., Dittus, R., & Dutwin, D. (2008). Public perceptions of nursing careers: The influence of the media and nursing shortages. *Nursing Economics*, 26(3), 144–165.
- Talbert, J.J. (2009). Distance education: One solution to the nursing shortage? *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 13(3), 269–270.

Article Highlights Need for Training in Palliative Care

I was intrigued by the article titled, “Diagnosis, Pathology, Treatment, and

Nursing Considerations for Cancer of Unknown Primary” (Winkeljohn, 2009). I personally have had a loved one suffer the frustrating consequences of dealing with a rare type of cancer. This experience is not only devastating to the patient, but also to the family closely involved. Watching your family member suffer through painful and exhausting treatments is heartbreaking. This ordeal becomes even more disappointing when doctors discover that nothing has been helping to rid the individual of cancer. It was because of my personal experience that I was initially drawn to this article. I was interested in learning of the new treatments and means of diagnosing these rare types of cancers that take the lives of thousands each year. I was encouraged to see the numerous developments that have been made to assist in the battle against cancer since the loss of my own family member. Awareness of new cancer research that is continually being done helps to provide hope to those who have been touched by the effects of cancer.

One aspect of this article that I found particularly interesting was that the author included ways in which oncology nurses should interact with patients with cancer. I feel that this is an important matter to address, especially when nurses themselves do not know what to tell patients about what to expect from rare illness. Recent studies have shown that there is a great decrease in the amount of content covered in nursing textbooks related to palliative care, which helps to explain the lack of knowledge about caring for patients who have unfortunate prognoses (Ferrell & Coyle, 2008). I also feel that oncology nurses need to be specially prepared for