

# I CAN

## NEWSLETTER

Fighting cancer through science, healthy living, and prevention

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# YOU FIGHT SO I CAN

## Thank You, Nurses

Oncology nurses and other members of the healthcare team fill vital, versatile roles. Learn how they balance clinical excellence with compassionate care in this issue of the I Can newsletter.



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## Team Super Powers Support Patients Fighting Cancer

An oncology nurse's mission goes beyond medicine. It focuses on hearts. Soothing worries. Explaining procedures. Answering questions. Responding to emergencies and helping make difficult situations bearable for patients and families. They are there on good days and bad, providing a laugh or a shoulder to cry on.

A great nurse sees the patient, not the illness. A great nurse is nothing short of a super hero in disguise.



### Healing with Hands and Heart

Oncology nurses play a vital role, both clinically and emotionally, guiding cancer patients and their families through the cancer journey. Their vast technical duties can include administering chemotherapy and other treatments, managing side effects, monitoring physical conditions, working in clinical trials, creating health management strategies, supporting patients' families, providing cancer prevention information, and maintaining health records.

Because of the hands-on nature of their job, oncology nurses must blend great technical and clinical expertise with care and compassion.

"They must be knowledgeable of many complex diagnoses and therapies and provide insightful, empathetic patient care. It necessitates a complex synthesis of emotion and expertise," said Dr. Steven Paulson.

**"Oncology nurses are indispensable members of the healthcare team."**

**– Steven Paulson, M.D.**  
Chairman and President  
Texas Oncology



Dr. Paulson views oncology nurses as an extension of the physician.

"Oncology nurses can often reinforce messages delivered by a physician to the patient," Dr. Paulson said. "They can also mediate between physician and patient, dispel myths, or clarify information provided to patients and their families."

### Building Lasting Bonds

Due to the frequency of visits and duration of treatment, oncology nurses often develop enduring relationships with patients.

"I see many patients for long periods of time," said Stuart Anderson, RN, OCN, at Texas Oncology–Arlington North. "I feel like I know many patients and their families personally. That type of interaction is fulfilling."



Stuart Anderson, RN

"I also feel these relationships exemplify Texas Oncology's community-based services. Our patients receive most or all of their treatment and support at the same location, by familiar healthcare staff, close to their homes."

Felix Gonzalez, a patient undergoing treatment for prostate cancer at Texas Oncology–McAllen, sees a friendly face at every visit.

"I can rely on one constant every time I visit Texas Oncology–McAllen – America Cantu, RN, my triage nurse," said Gonzalez. "She and the healthcare team are welcoming and considerate. They create a pleasing atmosphere and treat me well, and that's helpful during stressful times."

### Contributing To Care

The access and trust forged from the close rapport nurses often develop with patients sometimes allows them to see a more complete picture and then offer important input to plans of care.



Nori Sullivan, RN

"We spend a lot of one-on-one time with patients, and with both the patient and physician together," said Nori Sullivan, RN, a Phase I research nurse and research manager at Texas Oncology–Fort Worth 12th Ave. "Often the patient will inform the nurse of a concern that they don't tell the doctor, or at times the family will tell the nurse something the patient has forgotten to mention altogether which is very important to the patient's care."

### Answering the Call of Duty

Many motivational factors, including individual inspiration and a thirst for knowledge, compel nurses to pursue the oncology specialty. For Angie Stephens, a licensed practical nurse at Texas Oncology–Wichita Falls Texoma Cancer Center, personal experience influenced her path to oncology nursing.



Angie Stephens, LPN

"I've lost both of my parents to cancer," said Stephens. "I was a teenager when my father died from lung cancer, and I feel my perspective can particularly benefit children who are faced with that same situation."

## Participating in the Fight

Texas Oncology nurses' dedication to patients and the communities they serve often extends beyond normal business hours. It's common to see members of the healthcare team leading cancer-related fundraisers, support groups, or activities in their spare time. For example, Molly Mullins, RN at Texas Oncology–Fort Worth 12th Ave., and her colleagues raised \$3,000 for the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition run/walk last year.



Molly Mullins, RN

Ruth Sullivan, an infusion nurse at Texas Oncology–El Paso Cancer Treatment Center, volunteers her time facilitating a bi-weekly cancer support group at a local church.



Ruth Sullivan, RN

“Our support group encourages and connects cancer survivors and patients currently undergoing treatment,” said Sullivan. “I would appreciate support like this if I was a cancer patient. Our jobs as oncology nurses are not only treating physical needs, but also inspiring, encouraging, and caring for our patients psychologically.”

## Sharon Baley: Caring with Personal Experience

No one is immune to cancer. Not even those who dedicate their lives to treating it.

Sharon Baley, clinical nurse specialist at Texas Oncology–Austin Midtown, has cared for patients at Austin-area Texas Oncology locations since 2000. Eight years ago, she found herself sitting in the patient's chair.

Following a regularly scheduled mammogram, Sharon was called back for additional imaging and tests. After her physician told her she had breast cancer, she responded, “You know where I work. I see patients all day. I don't have time to have cancer.”



Sharon Baley, CNS

Shortly thereafter, Sharon underwent surgery and began a chemotherapy regimen. Texas Oncology granted her a flexible

work schedule, and she continued to work throughout chemotherapy treatments. Sharon's experience has given her a unique perspective when caring for her own patients.

“You don't have to be a cancer survivor to empathize with cancer patients,” said Baley. “But my experience has given me insight into what my patients are going through. I can be of particular help to those who are sharing the same symptoms and issues I did.”

## OCN® Certified: Special Nurses for Special Patients

When oncology nurses are interested in continuing their education and attaining additional accreditation, an OCN® certification—Oncology Certified Nurse—is a customary option. After accruing 2,000 hours of oncology experience and meeting other criteria, a nurse is eligible to test his or her specialized knowledge and competency in oncology nursing, administered by a nationally-recognized accrediting organization.

Texas Oncology currently employs a remarkable 282 OCN certified nurses across its network.

“Texas Oncology encourages its nurses and members of its healthcare team to continue their professional growth,” said Paula Sturiale, RN, OCN, Texas Oncology's director of clinical services. “The significant number of OCN certified nurses at Texas Oncology locations across the state indicates our nurses are vested in providing the highest quality care in their communities.

“Our patients see the OCN certification and can feel assured their care is in capable, experienced hands.”



Patsy Aday, RN, OCN

## Say #SuperThanks This Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving, Texas Oncology is extending special thanks to its nurses and healthcare teams who support our patients in their fight against cancer. In many ways, they are nothing short of super heroes.

Honor your favorite with special recognition at [TexasOncology.com/SuperThanks](https://www.texasoncology.com/SuperThanks). Also follow @TexasOncology on Twitter and Facebook throughout November to see our super heroes highlighted.

## The Role of a Nurse Practitioner

In order to increase patients' access to healthcare providers, the nurse practitioner (NP) role is being added to some healthcare teams. NPs, also known as advanced practice registered nurses, are nurses who are credentialed to perform a broader range of healthcare services than a registered nurse. NPs have completed extensive training at the master's- or doctoral-level.

NPs are permitted to perform duties such as:

- Conduct office visits and physical exams
- Prescribe medicine
- Diagnose and treat illnesses
- Order chemotherapy labs
- Perform certain procedures such as a blood and marrow biopsy or lumbar puncture

family. Nurses must recognize the intricacies in caring for each patient and then utilize their experience and expertise effectively in each case.”

One of the most common issues the care team faces is language barriers. Many Texas Oncology locations have interpreters on-site who are able to translate to increase patients' understanding. However, overcoming language barriers is just one step in providing culturally competent care. Patients' cultures can impact their interactions with practitioners or how physical examinations are conducted. Some cultures will only interact with male providers; other cultures have dietary beliefs that may impact their course of treatment or emphasize spiritual and religious beliefs as a supplement to their treatment.

“You really have to explain that their higher power put care providers into their life to help receive that care,” said Gennie Howe, RN, Texas Oncology–Plano East. “Providing culturally competent care involves working through those cultural beliefs and incorporating them, not working against them.”



Gennie Howe, RN

The diverse cultures nurses interact with vary widely. Texas Oncology locations in the Rio Grande Valley have a high number of Hispanic patients where extended families play a significant role in the patient's care and often attend appointments. In Houston, it is not uncommon to hear multiple languages spoken within the diverse group of patients receiving chemo. The challenge for the nurse is being aware of a patient's customs, backgrounds, and beliefs.

Howe notes culturally competent care requires an individual, and sometimes unique, approach. “I've spent a lot of time learning about my patients' cultures, and I learn from other care providers.” Understanding cultural differences adds another level of personalized care that can make a difference in patients' lives. “I see the appreciation from my patients and that makes it worthwhile.”

## Compassionate Care in Every Culture

Texas Oncology patients come from all corners of the world, bringing a wide range of cultures and belief systems. Providing culturally competent care is an important consideration for the patient care team.

Culturally competent care involves heightened sensitivity and understanding of cultural beliefs and adapting treatments and approaches. It can be as simple as discussing the risks for certain cancers because of a patient's ethnicity, such as the higher rate of cervical cancer in Hispanic patients, or dispelling myths like skin cancer only impacts fair skinned patients.

“Nurses must adapt and care for each patient based on their individual needs,” said Dr. Steve Paulson, Texas Oncology chairman and president. “Patients differ in many ways, from culturally to their level of support from friends and

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### About Texas Oncology

As an independent oncology practice, Texas Oncology is comprised of more than 375 physicians and more than 150 sites of service throughout Texas and southeastern Oklahoma and is a pioneer in community-based cancer care. Patients are treated with today's most advanced, effective cancer technologies and treatments, and have the opportunity to take part in some of the most promising clinical trials in the nation for new drugs and treatments for a broad range of cancers, near the critical support of family and friends. **Texas Breast Specialists** and **Texas Urology Specialists** are a part of **Texas Oncology**.

Learn more at 1-888-864-ICAN (4226) or [www.TexasOncology.com](http://www.TexasOncology.com).