

# Oncology Nursing Services

Sue Childress, RN, MN, OCN, was appointed director of Nursing Services at Huntsman Cancer Hospital in April 2007.

Reaching for excellence is definitely among Sue Childress's major goals for nursing at Huntsman Cancer Hospital (HCH). "Because of HCH's position as the premiere cancer hospital in the Intermountain region, I see the opportunity for our nurses to become known as a leading oncology nursing group," she says.

Such a reputation must be earned. Childress stresses the importance of HCH nurses deepening their oncology expertise. In July 2007, HCH started its unique Oncology Nursing Internship Program. The program gives promising new nurses both classroom education and a broad range of clinical experience in all aspects of cancer care. The paid interns are required to make a two-year commitment to work at HCH upon completion of the program, with at least one year in an inpatient unit.

"The internship program helps us locate exceptional nurses who want to be with HCH for a long time," says Childress. "A long-tenured nursing staff benefits both patients and the hospital with cohesiveness, continuity, and depth of experience."

Childress also encourages nurses to obtain the prestigious oncology nursing certification awarded

by the Oncology Nursing Society, the national organization for nurses in cancer care. Nurses must have worked in oncology for at least two years before taking the rigorous examination that earns the oncology certified nurse (OCN) designation, and they must continue their oncology nursing education to maintain certification.

"Someday soon, I'd like to be able to say that all HCH nurses are oncology certified nurses," says Childress. Currently, more than 30 HCH nurses have OCN status.

Childress has been instrumental in furthering communication and cooperation between nursing units. For example, she's working with

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*Huntsman Cancer Institute nurses provide personalized care and attention to each patient while developing and improving their oncology skills.*

outpatient and inpatient nurses to update and standardize patient education materials. This initiative also aims to improve how nurses share information with their patients, so that patients are able to participate effectively in their cancer treatment and recovery.

“So many patients ‘flow’ between inpatient and outpatient status during the course of their treatment. Coordination between all nursing units is essential,” Childress says.

What does Childress say about her first months as director of Nursing Services? “I love my job. I love my job.” She jokes that the best part is being invited to all the nurses’ potlucks. But seriously, she says, “I love bringing nurses from all the units together so our cancer patients receive the best care.”



“Knowing the whole circle patients go through in their cancer treatment will be so valuable to my nursing practice,” says Bryn Berry, RN, BSN. She is one of seven nurses in the Oncology Nursing Internship Program initiated this year at Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI).

As a Westminster College nursing student, Bryn attended an open house at the 2004 inauguration of Huntsman Cancer Hospital (HCH). An oncology nurse there took her aside to tell her oncology nursing is medicine’s best kept secret. “She said you just can’t duplicate the opportunities to develop close relationships with patients and their families,” Bryn says. “Families are tighter when someone has a cancer diagnosis. I want to be part of the healing process for both patients and families.”

By 2005, Bryn was a student intern in HCH’s fifth floor inpatient surgical unit. She was working there as a nurse when she was awarded the oncology nursing internship.

The 16-week internship starts with four weeks of classes on a broad range of cancer care topics. Afterward, the interns spend eight weeks in rotation to each of the inpatient floors and outpatient clinics. “In nursing, we often see only a specialized niche of cancer care. Rotating through the units has given all the interns a much broader perspective,” she says.

“My last rotation takes me back to the fifth floor. I’ll be happy to come home again,” Bryn says. That’s where she would like to fulfill the internship’s two-year nursing commitment to HCI. It brings her full circle.