

Building CANO/ACIO's capacity for research engagement

By Sally Thorne, RN, PhD, FAAN, FCAHS

Since joining the CANO/ACIO Board as the Director-at-Large (DAL) for Research in October 2011, I have been overwhelmed by the incredible creativity and energy observable across the CANO/ACIO membership. Being of a certain "vintage," I have seen a lot in this profession. But rarely have I been part of a nursing organization with so many of its members ready and waiting to step up to the plate when called upon, and full of enthusiasm and brilliant ideas about how to advance the cause of oncology nursing and celebrate its successes. It truly has been a thrilling and humbling experience to engage more actively with what CANO/ACIO stands for and to see what a remarkable organization it has become.

My role was dreamed up by your board as a signal that it wanted to develop research capacity within CANO/ACIO. Not only did the board want to become more effective in integrating evidence into its ongoing initiatives, but it also believed that expanding exposure to research skill development was a priority for many of its members. I was lucky enough to become the first DAL—Research. This role allowed me to work with the board in developing the role description, and to build upon a lot of creative effort by the prior research committee to set the platform for new ways of looking forward.

One of my first responsibilities was to rebuild and renovate the CANO/ACIO Research Committee. I was delighted that a terrific group of CANO/ACIO members from across the country agreed to join me. They are Tracy Truant (B.C.), Jamie Penner (Manitoba), Maureen McQuestion, Jacqueline Galica and Catriona Buick (Ontario), Andréa Laizner and Christine Maheu (Quebec), and Krista Wilkins (New Brunswick). As a team, we have wrestled with the complexity of member needs, member engagement, and organizational

initiatives. We have been gratified that the board of directors has been unfailingly enthusiastic in its support of our proposals and ideas, and has shown a genuine interest in the integration.

One of the projects we took on this past year was to create a plan for the evaluation of the National Standards for Chemotherapy Administration—a project that has been such a major CANO/ACIO priority in recent years. That evaluation has been completed, the final report submitted to CANO/ACIO in December, 2012, and the methodology we developed has attracted the interest of the Canadian Nurses Association, as a viable model for other nursing groups to consider when it comes to trying to figure out how to document impact. We have also developed CANO/ACIO guidelines on such matters as "Intellectual Property and Authorship" and "Access to Members for the Purposes of Research," both of which have now achieved board approval. We have renovated and revised the CANO/ACIO Research Grants Program, simplifying the application process so that it is more accessible to members who are not yet "seasoned researchers" and expanded the number of grants that will be available. We have created a Scientific Review Panel at "arms-length" from the CANO/ACIO Research Committee to ensure that we can model fair and transparent review processes at all levels without worry about conflict of interest.

Some of our most exciting conversations to date have been in relation to "Member Engagement" in research. At the 2012 CANO/ACIO Conference, we led a workshop aimed at members who wanted to explore research engagement, but were not sure how to proceed. From that experience, we learned a great deal about how difficult it can be for those without extensive formal research training (for example, at the PhD level) to feel like full participants in many of the research presentations and

discussions that have occurred at CANO/ACIO meetings. What this tells us is that the oncology nursing research community may not yet be doing all it can to tailor its messages to a predominantly clinical audience and may be inadvertently deepening a divide. As an academic, I fully understand the pressure we put on grad students, for example, to be highly attuned to the intricacies of technical methodological detail. However, I also fully understand how irrelevant it might seem to a professional audience that is far more interested in the immediate "what does this mean for practice?" aspect! So, we have lots to do to help nurses earlier in their research adventures to become part of the conversation and to remind those who have been travelling it for a while to remember their professional roots. And what we have learned from the enthusiasm of all of our workshop participants and others is that, when we get it right, clinical and research wisdom truly do inspire one another!

On the basis of this commitment to member engagement, the Research Committee is in the midst of a wide range of new initiatives that you'll see rolling out over the coming year. We are inspired by the creativity and commitment of the membership to align research development opportunities with as many of our core functions as possible. We see CANO/ACIO as an inherently knowledge AND practice-based association. And, so, we are delighted at the opportunity to strengthen the bridges across the research and practice realities! We invite all of you to join the fun. ☒

About the author

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