

# Nurse to Know: Janice Chobanuk

## What is your present role? What do you do in that role?

My present role is the Director of Ambulatory Care and Systemic Therapy in Community Oncology in Alberta Health Services. I oversee the direction and standards in systemic therapy services in 15 community-based cancer centres scattered across Northern, Central and Southern Alberta. The 15 centres consist of four Regional Cancer Centres located in Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, and Lethbridge (the cancer centres in Red Deer and Lethbridge also provide radiation therapy services). The 11 smaller centres are located in rural areas of Alberta and housed in regional hospitals. I also have two breast programs in my portfolio staffed with nurse navigators to navigate breast cancer patients to treatment in a cancer centre in Red Deer or Edmonton. Key aspects of this role include service planning, staff training and development, optimization of oncology standards and services for systemic therapy, and maintenance of competencies relevant to the safe delivery of care, and budgetary responsibilities. Community Oncology is one of the five divisions within CancerControl Alberta. Other divisions in CancerControl Alberta include the Tom Cross Cancer Centre (Calgary); Cross Cancer Institute (Edmonton); Provincial Professional Practices; and Cancer Measures, Outcomes, Research and Evaluation.

## What drew you into nursing? What influenced you to become a nurse?

After college, I had been in the workforce for a number of years and found that I was drawn to working with people, and dealing with the social and science aspects related to health problems. I decided the nursing profession included all three of my passions—working with people, health issues, and social concerns. I decided to return to school and study the science of nursing. I have not looked back since. Nursing has been a fabulous career for me. I have been fortunate to work in a plethora of nursing positions such as home care, hospitals, in information systems, in hospice care, in the College of

Nursing, overseas, in specialized roles, in project work, in research and now in leadership. There are so many great prospects in nursing, if a person is open to change and new opportunities.

## What drew you into oncology nursing?

### What influenced you to become an oncology nurse?

I had been working in general surgery and orthopedics at the University of Alberta for a number of years and was impressed by one oncologist from the Cross Cancer Institute. This oncologist would make a personal visit to all the colorectal cancer patients who underwent surgery and were to receive systemic therapy once they were discharged. He would discuss the next phase of their cancer journey and explain what to anticipate when they started their chemotherapy at the Cross Cancer Institute. I was not only impressed with the compassionate approach to patient care, but also fascinated with the information he relayed to these patients. I decided that I wanted to specialize in oncology nursing.

### How would you characterize or describe the driving forces for you regarding your practice as a nurse?

The driving forces that impact my practice as an oncology nurse are person-centred care, knowledge, compassion, and ethics. The fundamental reason I chose nursing, as a profession, is the human connection and compassion. The science and amount of knowledge being generated from nursing and other health-related disciplines is continually evolving. I find it is a very exciting experience to be learning. Although challenging to keep up with all this information, it is very stimulating and exciting to embrace it and take it into practice. Lastly, nurses continually deal with values and ethics on a daily basis whether in the front-line or in leadership positions.

### What have you seen as the biggest changes for nurses over the years of your career?

The greatest change for oncology nursing that I have experienced is the evolution of cancer from a life-limiting disease to a chronic disease. Additionally,



over the years, the growth and ease of access to knowledge for the health care professionals, patients and families, and the general public has been a huge change.

### What do you see as the biggest challenges for oncology nursing or oncology nurses today?

An important challenge for nursing is clearly defining the professional role. Nurses are so diversified and brilliant, and can do so many things, they are pulled in many directions and may lose sight of the core values, philosophy, and science of nursing.

### What is your greatest hope for the future of oncology nursing?

My greatest hope for the future of oncology nursing is to see the ongoing advancement of knowledge and that we never lose sight of the importance of the human connection. My favourite quote that reminds me of the importance of this connection is:

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.  
—Leo Buscaglia

### What is the best advice you would give to an individual who is considering becoming a nurse or an oncology nurse?

The best advice I would give to an individual considering oncology nursing is that it is a career that prepares you for life's journey. You learn fear, compassion, and gain knowledge and skills that you can apply in health care or life. If you decide to change to another career, it gives you an excellent foundation of competencies, knowledge, ethics, values, and respect for the fragility of life.