

Barbara L. Summers, PhD, tells a story about Leading Self

Dr. Summers served as head Chief Nursing Officer and Head of the Division of Nursing from 2003- 2015, when she retired from the institution. In an interview conducted in 2014 she talks about how she came to see that leadership would increase her ability to have an impact on patients' health.



Wider Impact as a Leader

One of the nursing theories that I was exposed to in my undergraduate program and then in my graduate program was called Orem's Theory of Self-Care, and the fundamental tenet is that the role of nurses is to support our clients, our patients, to be able to return to an optimal state of health that will allow them to fully engage in their own self-care. So that was very meaningful for me in thinking about my interactions with individual patients --that my goal was always to work with them as a partner in helping them to return to the optimum state of health. I like to tell our young nurses who are thinking about going back to school, "...more than anything, graduate school teaches you how to think differently than you did before you were in graduate school."

I started to see that as a clinical nurse specialist, I wanted to be able to support a population of patients realizing the highest level of health possible, and I was going to do that through bedside nurses. So it was enormously appealing to me to come to the understanding that I had the opportunity to have an impact on a much larger number of patients as a leader than I would as an individual practitioner... that clicked for me, and that was wonderful.

About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

To explore the full interview go to: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/SummersB>

About the speaker:

Barbara L. Summers, PhD served as Chief Nursing Officer and Head of the Division of Nursing from 2003 until 2015, when she retired.

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Interview Collection: Tacey A. Rosolowski, PhD, trosolowski@mdanderson.org

Photos and archival material: Javier Garza, MSIS, jjgarza@mdanderson.org