

# The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

**Provide \$244 million for Title VIII Nursing Programs**



## Securing and Maintaining an Adequate Oncology Nursing Workforce

In 2016, an estimated 1.7 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer, and more than 595,000 will lose their battle with this disease. At the same time, the national nursing shortage is expected to worsen. Cancer is a complex, multifaceted chronic disease, and people with cancer require specialty-nursing intervention at every step of the cancer experience.

Oncology nurses are on the front lines in the provision of quality care for cancer patients – administering chemotherapy, managing patient therapies and side-effects, providing treatment education and counseling to patients and family members. People with cancer are best served by nurses who specialize and are certified in oncology care.

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that nursing shortages in hospitals are associated with a higher risk of complications – such as urinary tract infections and pneumonia, longer hospital stays, and even patient death.<sup>1</sup> With an increasing number of people with cancer needing high-quality health care, combined with an inadequate nursing workforce, our nation could quickly face a cancer care crisis of serious proportion, with limited access to quality cancer care, particularly in traditionally underserved areas.

Nurses also help conduct cancer research and clinical trials. With a shortage of cancer research nurses, progress against cancer will take longer because of scarce human resources coupled with the reality that some practice and cancer center resources could be funneled away from cancer research in order to pay for the hiring and retention of oncology nurses to provide direct patient care.

The members of One Voice Against Cancer urge Congress to fund a higher rate of nursing scholarships and loan repayment applications, support other essential programs to sustain our nation's nursing workforce.



<sup>1</sup> Needleman J., Buerhaus P., Mattke S., Stewart M., Zelevinsky K. "Nurse-Staffing Levels and the Quality of Care in Hospitals." *New England Journal of Medicine* 346:, (May 30, 2002): 1715-1722.