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## History Of Hospice Nursing -- North Carolina Nurses Making An Impact

By: Pamela Harwell, RN, BSN, CCM and **Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN**

### Abstract

Providing care for dying people has existed in cultures around the globe and throughout recorded history. During the Middle Ages, Christian religious orders established networks of hospices across Europe, in particular along the routes of the Crusades. These hospices were grounded in spiritual care and monks and nuns fed, clothed, and cleaned their dying patients. In the 1960s, these centuries-old institutions were modernized and enhanced by the work of a nurse in England, Cicely Saunders. Wanting to do all she could for those near death, she became a physician so she could offer unfettered service to those in need.

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# History of Hospice Nursing – North Carolina Nurses Making an Impact

By NCNA Members Pamela Harwell, RN, BSN, CCM and Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN; Nursing History Council Member

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*"You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die."*

Dr. Cicely Saunders opened London's St. Christopher's Hospice in 1967, beginning the modern hospice movement. Inspired by a presentation by Dr. Saunders at the Yale University School of Nursing, Yale Dean Florence Wald founded the first hospice in the United States in 1974: the Connecticut Hospice. Yale University later awarded Wald an honorary doctorate, calling her "the mother of the American hospice movement".

In the 1980s, NCNA and many North Carolina nurses recognized the importance of hospice nursing. This article provides a timeline highlighting contributions NCNA members have made to establishing and expanding hospice care in our state.

## 1983

The NCNA Board of Directors voted to join Hospice of North Carolina as an organizational member.

## 1985

After serving as the founding Dean at the UNC Greensboro School of Nursing, Eloise "Patty" Lewis was instrumental in establishing North Carolina's first in-patient hospice unit at Greensboro's Moses Cone Memorial Hospital. Dr. Lewis, Vice President of Hospice of Greensboro, achieved other firsts: establishing a dual hospice center/grief counseling center, launching North Carolina's first residential AIDS patient hospice, and initiating the first pediatric hospice-based grief

counseling center in the state. Dr. Lewis received several honors for her work, including North Carolina's highest hospice honor, the Peter G. Keese Award. In 1998, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization recognized Lewis with its "Volunteers are the Foundation of Hospice" award.

## 1987

Lynn Erdman, Presbyterian Hospital's first oncology clinical nurse specialist, opened the first Charlotte hospital and community-based hospice organization. Erdman received an NCNA Nurse of The Year Award in 1989. She is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN), nursing's highest honor.

Another NCNA Nurse of the Year Honoree that same year was Diane Kimel of Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro. Kimel managed both the 6-bed hospice inpatient unit and the hospital's AIDS team. Her patients often transferred between the Hospice of Greensboro and Moses Cone during their illnesses.

The first hospice nurse who was elected President of NCNA was Jo Franklin (1987-1989). She worked as a care coordinator at Hospice of Rowan County. Franklin received NCNA's Outstanding Service Award in 2004. The Nadine Potts/Jo Franklin Nursing Excellence Scholarship at Rowan Cabarrus Community College Foundation commemorates her legacy.

Today there are approximately 80 hospice programs in North Carolina. They employ hundreds of nurses who provide in-patient and home bound care, case management and administrative services. They are putting into practice Dr. Cicely Saunders' words: "You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die."

*Are you interested in joining the Nursing History Council? We would love to have you! NCNA members are welcome to join any council they wish. To change your council status, simply update your Member Profile at [www.ncnurses.org](http://www.ncnurses.org) or email [LaurenZahn@ncnurses.org](mailto:LaurenZahn@ncnurses.org).*

**The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the North Carolina Nurses Association or its board of directors. ■**