

The de Souza Institute

Advancing Oncology Nursing Practice in Ontario

BY MARY JANE ESPLÉN, PHD, RN

It is exciting to inform you that the de Souza Institute has been launched. Named after the late Anna Maria de Souza, Founder, President & CEO of The Brazilian Ball, who passed away at Princess Margaret Hospital in September 2007 after a courageous battle with cancer, the de Souza Institute is dedicated to providing Ontarians with the world's best cancer nursing care. Established in May 2008 with \$15 million funding over five years from the Nursing Secretariat of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Institute is a partnership with the Government of Ontario and The Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), University Health Network (UHN) and Cancer Care Ontario (CCO).

As the inaugural director, I am guided by a steering committee co-chaired by Dr. Mary Ferguson-Paré (UHN), Esther Green (CCO) and Dr. Mary Gospodarowicz (PMH) with leaders in cancer care across Ontario. Based on our strategic plan, the de Souza team has already launched several innovative programs in just its first six months, including:

- Supporting more than 150 oncology nurses to prepare for the 2009 Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) national certification exams in oncology or hospice palliative care. We provided both financial support and weekly study group seminars broadcasted live via Ontario's telehealth network to help nurses prepare for the exams.
- Delivering Train-the-Trainer programs across Ontario on areas that are knowledge gaps identified by oncology nurses, such as managing the emotional aspects of cancer care and cancer genetics.
- Awarding thirty-one oncology and palliative care nurses in Ontario who are enrolled in graduate programs (either Master's or PhD level) with a de Souza Fellowship Award. These fellowships will support the advancement of oncology clinical practice, education, research

and nursing leadership. These nurses will play a critical role in advancing expert nursing cancer care in this province.

- Providing each of Ontario's 14 Regional Cancer Centres with a total of \$1.4 million for information technology infrastructure building to support nurses' learning.



Above: Anna Maria de Souza, Founder of the Brazilian Ball.
Left: Mary Jane Esplen, PhD, RN, Director of the de Souza Institute, CIHR Scientist and Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto



THE GOAL of the Institute is to support every cancer nurse in Ontario so that they will be knowledgeable in evidence-based oncology practice, compassionate, aware of the interpersonal context and continuously engaged in lifelong learning, in order to enable authentic encounters in every nurse-person situation.

Over the next five years, expect a state-of-the-art Institute for educating oncology nurses in Ontario to create "de Souza experts". These oncology experts will have the professional capacity, knowledge and skill to provide the care that matters most to oncology patients and their families.

By creating a new standard of oncology nursing- "the de Souza nurse" - we will reach our ultimate goal of meeting Ontario's vision to provide the best cancer care in the world. ●