



Member Spotlight

What do you do for work and who do you serve?

I am faculty at the University at Buffalo, School of Nursing. Our mission is to develop nurse leaders and promote academic and scholarly excellence to improve health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. I am also adjunct assistant professor of oncology at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center.

I have been an oncology nurse, dedicated to serving individuals and communities impacted by cancer for most of my career. As a nurse, I have been fortunate to work in a variety of roles including patient care, research, leadership, and education.

What motivates you to volunteer to reduce the burden of cancer?

All of us are impacted in some way by a diagnosis of cancer. It could be a family member, significant other, or a personal diagnosis. Over the course of my career, I have witnessed many advances in cancer care management improving outcomes, quality of life, and overall survival. These advances in cancer care and services keep me motivated to ensure health equity, and to reduce the burden of cancer for everyone.

What collaborations have been successful in your work to reduce the burden of cancer?

My academic and scientific partners at the University of Utah School of Nursing, the American Cancer Society, University at Buffalo and the School of Nursing, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, NYS Cancer Consortium members, the Oncology Nursing Society, and The UMass Boston – Dana Farber/Harvard Cancer Center U54 Partnership are a few of my collaborations that have contributed to the success of my program of cancer care education and research in cancer and health disparities within NYS.



Darryl Somayaji, PhD, RN
University at Buffalo

What will be the biggest challenge in reducing the burden of cancer in the near future?

Health equity and access to critical health services continues to be the biggest challenge to reduce the burden of cancer. We know that social determinants of health, and lack of insurance or inadequate health coverage to cancer prevention, screening, treatment, symptom management and supportive services directly impact patient outcomes and quality of life. NYS residents that are underinsured or uninsured are less likely to receive preventive cancer care or screening, are more likely to receive inadequate or delayed treatment, and are at greater risk to die sooner than those with adequate health insurance coverage.





Member Spotlight

How does your work support the NYS Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan?

I am a member of a collaborative research team from the University at Buffalo schools of Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Medicine, Bioinformatics, and Biostatistics. Our New York State partners for our projects are the New York State Department of Health and our local community partners. Three successfully funded research projects were informed by the NYS Comprehensive Control Plan: 1) identification of risk factors and gaps in care for rural /urban health-disparities in lung cancer, 2) "Patient Voices Fighting Cancer" (PVFC) designed, implemented, and evaluated educational tools to foster patient and provider conversations that build awareness of cancer risks to activate screening and behavior modification specifically in lung, prostate, esophageal, kidney, oral, and colorectal cancer and 3) develop, implement, and evaluate a community-based curriculum emphasizing the importance of family history, genetic screening, and related risk factors for breast cancer among African American women. The NYS priority areas of action for cancer-related health equity, health promotion & cancer prevention were utilized to design, implement, and evaluate funded research projects.

