

AALNC Pittsburgh Chapter LiNC

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“The Link Between Healthcare and the Legal Profession”

AALNC Pittsburgh chapter hosts, "Mind Your Own Business: Success Strategies for Legal & Healthcare Professionals"

Tiffany Tomkowitz BS, BSN, RN

Fall is a time for apple picking, plaid scarves, pumpkin pie and, of course, the AALNC Pittsburgh Chapter's biennial conference! There's a lot to look forward to for this year's attendees!

We have a remarkable line-up of speakers, covering a vast array of topics. Dr. Kathleen Sekula will teach us about the value SANE nurses bring when navigating the courts and records. Dr. Stephen Cohen will share his colon/rectal surgical experience to explain wrong site organ surgery. Dr. Elizabeth Hill, notable fall expert, will share what she knows about fall-related injury cases. Attendees will also learn about opioid use and human trafficking with Lynn Fauerbach. Our final speaker, Attorney James Hartline will share his advice on "How to remain smarter than the attorneys who employ you".

Who doesn't love a chance at winning a big ol' basket of goodies? We have so many baskets, we had to add more tables to our conference room! At last count, we had over \$1500 worth of basket giveaways. Bring some cash -you've got a GREAT chance of winning! Thank you to all of the people who have donated baskets. You've blown us away with your support.

Sabika anyone? That's right - you'll be able to get a head start on your holiday shopping this year *during* the conference. Be sure to check out the beautiful selection of jewelry at the Sabika table.

Interested in continuing your education? Stop by the Duquesne University School of Nursing table for more information.

While you're at it, stop by the Advance Talent table. Their website says it all..."We aren't just a staffing company; we are a unique network of highly experienced and trained medical and legal professionals,

Board of Directors

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tiffany@tomkowitz.com

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sakress@verizon.net

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juliefagan23@gmail.com

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audrey.lalli@yahoo.com

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ruger56@gmail.com

Kelly Campbell
Kelly@cardinallifecare.com

Sue Blackhurst
sblackhurst@dmcpc.com

AALNC- Pittsburgh Chapter's Biennial Conference

Will be held on Saturday, November 2, 2019 at Duquesne University. Registration begins at 7:30 am and conference introductions at 8:00 am. Parking is conveniently located in the Forbes Avenue garage.

Please contact Stephanie Kress at sakress@verizon.net to be added to our invitation list or visit Eventbrite.com and search AALNC for pre-sale tickets. Tickets will also be available at the door— cash or check only.

offering innovative workforce solutions to the legal and medical industries. We are Advance Talent."

Want to get your information out to all the attendees? Place your business cards on the vendor table. For \$25, your business cards and/or marketing material can be placed for conference attendees to take with them. Don't forget to stop by the table to grab lots of contact information!

Swing around to the Precise table. The collective Precise companies employ dedicated litigation support professionals including attorneys, trial consultants, eDiscovery experts, certified medical illustrators, certified legal video specialists, graphic artists, and expert animators.

Interested in hospice? Stop by the Bethany Hospice table and say "hi". Our past president, Diane Mead, is the founder and CEO!

Finally - don't forget to visit the AALNC Pittsburgh Chapter table. One of our members will be happy to answer any questions you have. We'll have items for sale and membership applications available as well.

In the past, our conference attendees were from a variety of backgrounds. Nursing students, in-house LNCs, experts and risk managers just to name a few. This year is no different. Get your business cards and be ready to network!

This year, we are experimenting with a Facebook ad campaign to help spread the word about our conference. Thank you to all of our members who helped market the conference through Facebook, Linked In, brochures and word of mouth (still the best marketing tool around!).

Your conference ticket includes both a continental breakfast and lunch. The menu for lunch will be a "Flavors of Fall" buffet. Hearty comfort food with some of fall's best flavors! Cider-braised chicken, pumpkin ravioli in a sage cream sauce, maple roasted brussel sprouts, crispy sheet pan roasted red potatoes, seasonal tossed salad, and dinner rolls with fall herbed butter. Come hungry!

We really want you to have a great time at our conference; however, our biggest goal is for you to walk away more informed than when you came. We hope you take this information back to work and share it among your colleagues. We also hope the networking opportunity leads to strong, mutually beneficial relationships.



Don't miss out on this opportunity for acquiring invaluable education for your clinical and legal practice, making lifelong business relationships and adding 5.5 nursing contact hours to your store!

Your investment is guaranteed to grow and our Conference Planning Committee strives to make "Mind Your Own Business" the highlight of your season!

Meet Our Newly Elected 2020 Board of Directors

Julie Fagan, BSN, RN, CIC: President

Julie Fagan has over 30 years of nursing experience, having graduated in the first ASN class of the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (UPB), and then again in the first BSN class of UPB in 1993. Her nursing career began in Medical-Surgical, but continued with a 20-year journey in Long Term Care. There, she held the positions of RN supervisor, Charge Nurse, and then went on to become the Staff Development Coordinator, Assistant Director of Nursing, the Regional Director of Infection Prevention, and Director of Nursing. She moved to Pittsburgh in 2010, and began working at Children's Hospital in Enterostomal Therapy, earning a certification in WOCN (Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurse). Because of the many years spent in LTC as an ADON, which combined the worlds of wound care and infection prevention, she has worked on many quality improvement projects to improve the care of patients in both skilled nursing facilities and in the hospital setting. She is currently the Manager of Infection Prevention at 2 UPMC hospitals. She has been a member of the AALNC and the Pittsburgh Chapter for over 3 years. Julie is excited to be a part of this passionate group of professionals and is looking forward to an opportunity to contribute to the continued success of our chapter.

Kelly Campbell, RN, BSN, CP, CLNC, CLCP: President-Elect

Kelly Campbell serves as CEO for Cardinal LifeCare Consulting. She is also a member of the Board of Directors for Visiting Nurses of Western PA and Senior Lutheran Life. She served as Editor and Co-Editor of the Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning. Kelly has multiple publications in the Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning, Journal of Life Care Planning and Perfusion Journal. Kelly is a chapter author and peer reviewer for AALNC Principles and Practice textbook. She was an associate editor for the first drafts for six chapters in this text and is also the author of the upcoming edition of Core Curriculum Nurse Life Care Planning Text. She has also worked as the Co-Host for Legal Nurse Business Podcast with Pat Iyer.

Kelly has served as a clinical mentor for Duquesne Graduate School of Forensic Nursing. She is an accomplished speaker who has presented at national conferences in several fields of medicine, including Texas Heart 25th anniversary honoring pioneer heart surgeon Dr. Denton Cooley. She has the honor of being the clinical specialist for assisting Dr. OZ with the first robotic heart surgery in the United States. She then participated in the first robotic heart surgery in several states such as Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, California and Ohio to only name a few. Her career also included working with corporations to assist in bringing medical devices to market.

Linda Fowler, DrPH, RN, NHA: Director at Large

Dr. Linda Fowler began her career in organizational management in 1965, achieving the titles of supervisor, director, consultant, instructor and administrator. As a healthcare executive for over 35 years, with a specialty in long-term care, she earned her Doctorate of Public Health in 1997 and remains licensed in Pennsylvania as a Registered Nurse and Nursing Home Administrator. She is an

accomplished speaker and author, maintains affiliations with many professional organizations and is currently an active volunteer with HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital and the Veterans Administration.

Dr. Fowler began her career as a legal nurse consultant in 1991 and has since remained a most valuable member of the Pittsburgh Chapter. She has served an extensive tenure on the Board of Directors, including two terms as President and continues to lend her time, knowledge and expertise to the members of our organization. It was the Pittsburgh Chapter's greatest privilege to present her with distinguished honor of the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017 for her countless years of leadership, education and mentorship.

Melissa Choma, RN, LNCC: Director at Large

Melissa Choma is currently working as an in-house legal nurse consultant for the law firm of Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman and Goggin. She works in the medical malpractice division of this large defense law firm. She obtained her Diploma in Nursing from the Ohio Valley Hospital School of Nursing (now Trinity Health System School of Nursing) in Steubenville, Ohio in 1989. She began her nursing career at the Ohio Valley Hospital in Steubenville, working on ICU/CCU/Telemetry Stepdown Units. In September 1997, she became a travel nurse (staying mainly on the east coast), working on various units, including open-heart stepdown. She "landed" at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore, as part of a travel assignment, working on the abdominal transplant floor. She made the decision to stop traveling in 2003 and remained at UMMC on the transplant floor, caring for patients who had undergone liver, pancreas, and kidney transplants. While there, she served as a charge nurse and preceptor to many new nurses. She returned to western Pennsylvania in July of 2007, taking a position at the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute of UPMC as a Clinical Transplant Coordinator, caring for a large caseload of patients who had received kidney transplants. While there, she completed a home study course for legal nurse consulting. She transitioned to Cigna Healthcare as a Transplant Case Manager in October 2014 but never forgot her love of legal nursing. In March of 2014, she became the in-house LNC for the Pittsburgh office of MDWCG. She obtained her LNCC in October of 2017. Melissa joined the Pittsburgh Chapter of the AALNC to begin networking with other nurses who have taken the journey into this wonderful specialty.

Holly Castello, MSN, RN, CCRN: Secretary

Holly has been a critical care nurse for most of her career at UPMC Presbyterian, working in both the Trauma and Transplant ICU's over the past 20 years. Over the course of the previous eight years, she has held management positions in the GI Lab and with Cardiovascular Services at UPMC St. Margaret, while continuing to work casual in the ICU at UPMC Presbyterian. Seven years ago, she started an independent legal nurse consulting business and in April of 2018, made the decision to join Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote full-time, while continuing to work casual in the ICU. Holly was previously a Director at Large for the Pittsburgh Chapter.

AALNC- Pittsburgh Chapter's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient



Sondra Fandray

In the spirit of our 30th anniversary, we honored a most celebrated member, founder and first President of our Chapter, who has so nobly helped advance the legal nurse consulting practice individually for so many members, for our local group and on a national level collectively.

Sondra began her career as an oncology nurse at St. Clair Hospital, switching roles to legal nurse consulting in 1987. As a pioneer of the field in the early years, she can be credited with defining our role and values as legal nurse consultants. Working primarily for defense firms, she shared her knowledge, wisdom and experience with attorneys and served as an advocate for healthcare provider defendants.

Our Chapter was chartered in 1989 by the work of Sondra, Suzanne Eynon and the first Board of Directors. She has chaired several local and national AALNC conferences and has served in numerous positions and on committees.

We give her our most humble gratitude for the solid foundation on which we attribute the Pittsburgh-Chapter's success.

"I attribute my success to this: I never gave nor took any excuse."

- Florence Nightingale

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!



The American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants–Pittsburgh Chapter would like to wish all of our members, associates and partners a wonderful and joyous Holiday Season and prosperous New Year.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

- Mahatma Gandhi

Ask Linda...

As both new and experienced LNC's, we have all had our share of questions and continue to experience times in our practice when we need a simple, straight-forward approach that she can offer.

Dear Linda,

My name was recently given to a defense firm for a rehabilitation case. They emailed me and I realized that I had already agreed to assist the plaintiff. What do you think will happen now? This was a first for me!

Linda says....

1. Tell the attorney that you are working with the plaintiff's attorney. Since you just received an email, he will appreciate knowing.
2. Your attorney will guide you on what you should respond to the defense.
3. If you had received records from the defense, you would probably be removed from the case.

Please send your Dear Linda questions to Stephanie Kress at sakress@verizon.net so that she may share her advice and experience with you.

What's New With Our Members

Director at Large, **Audrey Lalli** welcomed a new granddaughter, Gianna Rose, on August 10th. She was 8 lbs. 14 oz. and is Audrey's first local grandchild.

Stephanie Kress's daughter, Lauren finished up a spectacular cross country season for St. Gabriel, with her team finishing 3rd in the Diocesan Championships. Her youngest daughter, Lindsay had a grand-slam fall softball season this year.

Past President and CEO of Bethany Hospice, **Diane Mead**, is proud to announce they are expanding their business to now provide palliative care to the Pittsburgh community.

Newly-elected Director at Large, **Melissa Choma** is celebrating 5 years as an in-house LNC at Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin.

Past President, **Lori Klingman** and her husband Jim are planning a wedding for their youngest daughter, Katie Birsic on June 20, 2020. She and fiancé, Ryan Smith reside in Columbia, South Carolina and will be married in Pittsburgh.

The AALNC– Pittsburgh Chapter celebrates all of our members' milestones, achievements and joyous life's events. Please send your good news to Editor, Stephanie Kress at sakress@verizon.net so that we may share in your joy.

Pain Management Case Study by Donna Falcone, DNP, MSN, FNP-BC, CRNP

Medical malpractice cases are often read in the news, with questions to the audience, "How can these happen?" or "Who is at fault, the patient for non-compliance or the physician for an error in prescribing or in diagnostic error?" In this article, I would like to present a case study based on bias, which led to a diagnostic error and extensive hospitalization. I challenge you to critically think about this case and the ramifications that may occur in other settings, outside of this pain management setting.

BR was a 65- year old male, who had a 20- year history of back pain. PMH included only hypothyroidism. He sought treatment through neurosurgery for surgical correction of herniated discs from L3 – S1. Following surgery, patient was started on OxyContin ER and OxyContin IR PRN for pain management. This course of medication regime spanned 10 years, with pain management increasing doses and also providing additional diagnostic tests and invasive procedures. Through this 10- year period, BR was compliant with medication checks, pill counts and medical appointments. Through the pressure from the family, not the physicians in pain management, the patient was slowly tapered off opioids and placed on Lyrica, Cymbalta and TENS unit. For three years, BR continued to be seen at the pain management practice, with documented compliance of no opioid use, no other drug use. Pt.'s quality of life improved with increased cognition, activity level and quality of life. In June 2018, BR was noted to have changes in cognitive status, lethargy, and overall decline in physical status. Pain management increased appointments, with drug testing which noted patient compliance with opioid free labs, and in compliance with practice guidelines. From June 2018 to March 2019, BR was evaluated at pain management for compliance, medication checks and evaluation of pain. In March 2019, BR drove himself to medical appointment an hour away, presented to pain management appointment, with altered cognitive status, poor historian, falling, hypotension, and tachycardia. Pt was drug tested and sent via EMS to local hospital, an hour from his home, for evaluation. Evaluation at local hospital revealed no illicit drugs in system, was placed on antibiotics for pneumonia and was discharged to home. Note: Pt. did not have a working cell phone. Pt. was an hour from home, without transportation, with continued symptoms of hypotension, tachycardia, confusion, gait disturbance, and myoclonic movements. Family, in searching for BR, found him at the hospital and transported him to another hospital within the area closer to his home. Upon arrival at the new hospital, BR was again drug tested for illicit drugs and opioids, without any evidence. At the request of the family, TSH and T4 were ordered and BR was diagnosed with myxedema coma. Following a three- week hospitalization, with extensive measures, BR was discharged to home.

This case brings to light the medical malpractice concept of diagnostic error. According to Modern Healthcare magazine, errors related to diagnosis were the largest source of medical malpractice claims from 2013 – 2017. Coverys, in their report, found of 33 % of malpractice claims related to errors made during patient diagnosis, more than half were related to clinical diagnosis errors. This case represents the need for overall clinical assessment, and the impact of bias in care.

Fall Prevention and Why Documentation is Vital by Audrey Lalli, RN, BSN, CRRN

In my new position as Director of Quality and Risk Management, I do a great deal of research on falls. I truly believe that the person who comes up with a solution to lessen falls that is sustainable, but won't increase staffing and expense, will be a billionaire. In my research, I came upon something unprecedented.

A 79 year old patient with dementia died six days after a fall in a nursing facility. A wrongful death lawsuit was filed by the family with allegations of negligence of the nurses in that facility, causing the fall. The family and their attorney did not seek the services of a nurse expert to testify and support their case. The case was in Massachusetts. The facility petitioned for dismissal on the grounds there was no expert to support the plaintiff's case. The Court ruled expert testimony was required to prove inadequacy of the initial fall risk assessment on admission and initial care planning. However, expert testimony was not needed to prove negligence of the fact that no modification was implemented to the dementia care plan despite multiple falls during her stay. She had repeated non-injury falls without modification of the care plan other than addition of an ineffective seatbelt alarm on the wheelchair. This was a critical aspect of the case and it was allowed to go forward.

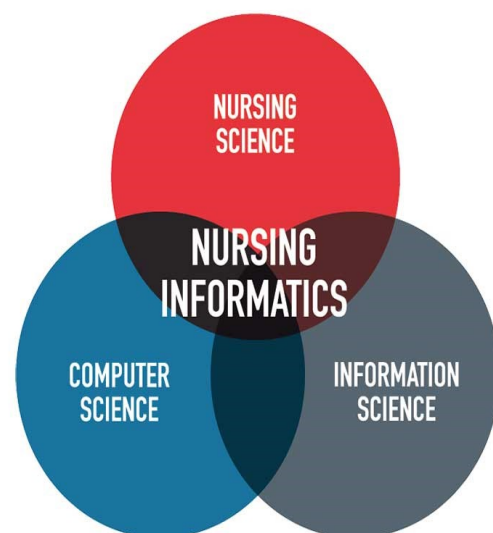
This shows that even falls without injury must be evaluated, with a review of existing fall prevention interventions and modification of these.

Meet Our Newest Member

Sharon McEwen, MSN, RN-BC, LNC

I began my professional nursing career in 1989 after graduating from Shadyside Hospital School of Nursing. I stayed at Shadyside and began working on a medical cardiology unit. I worked in that unit for 6 years and then moved into the critical care float pool. In the float pool I gained experience in Cardiothoracic ICU, Neuro ICU, Med-Surg ICU, and the Coronary Care Unit. I floated around for about 3 years then took a permanent position in the Med-Surg ICU. I stayed there for several years, but had a longing to be a trauma nurse. I loved the adrenaline rush and wanted more. I applied at UPMC Presbyterian in 2001 and began working in the ED/Trauma unit in the fall. I absolutely loved the Trauma unit but ended up with plantar fasciitis of my foot and couldn't take the constant pain standing for hours with lead on in the trauma bays. I am definitely a full-blooded trauma nurse. I left the ED/Trauma unit and worked in the Surgical Trauma ICU and Transplant unit at UPMC Presbyterian for another year and then decided to go back to UPMC Shadyside in the Med-Surg ICU. I stayed a staff nurse for another year in Med-Surg ICU and then came an opportunity to be the manager. I decided to apply and got the job! It was the best decision I ever made! I had the best staff in the world, proven by receiving the prestigious Beacon award from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) in back to back years. We were the first unit in all of UPMC to receive this award. From there, I decided to pursue my master's degree from Walden University with a focus on Nursing Informatics. I loved navigating the EMR and was the super user when we implemented our own EMR. After receiving my master's degree, I left the bedside and became the Director of Clinical and Operational Informatics at UPMC Presbyterian/Montefiore, achieving board-certification in Informatics. My role was overseeing the documentation of the EMR for end users. After a year in that role, I left UPMC after 28 years and pursued a position with Cerner, the EMR vendor. I still work for Cerner and have been with them for 5 years. I have been working as a Chief Nursing Informatics Officer for Cerner in a hospital in Ohio. This informatics role has allowed me to develop a unique skill set of interpreting chart audits. As you know, these can be very useful in determining if there has been any tampering with the chart. I am very happy to say, I landed my first LNC job with a firm in Florida doing mass tort cases! My long-term goal is to be independent and work for medical malpractice attorneys. I am very happy that I joined this group and look forward to learning from all of you! I look forward to networking and learning more about this wonderful field of legal nurse consulting!

Please help us welcome Sharon to the AALNC– Pittsburgh Chapter!



Reminders

Please don't forget to take advantage of your full benefits of AALNC National membership:

- (4) free webinars
- Electronic copy of the Journal of Legal Nurse Consulting

Upcoming Events

- Please join us for our Annual Holiday Dinner on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 30 at Monterey Bay Fish Grotto in Pittsburgh. . We will usher in our new President, Julie Fagan and welcome our newest Board members. Contact Kathy Seapker at kesrehab@comcast.net to be put on our RSVP list.

Our Chapter

This year, our organization is celebrating its 30-year anniversary. Since 1989, the AALNC–Pittsburgh Chapter has been helping nurses enter into the LNC profession , advance their practice and establish successful businesses by providing guidance, education and networking . By the tireless work of our Board of Directors and members, we have grown to be the largest chapter in our nation.

We invite you to join us for monthly meetings, social events and our biennial conference. We meet the second Wednesday of the month January-May, September and October at 5:30 pm in the Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote board room at Two PPG Place and host a variety of speakers throughout the year. Contact Kathy Seapker at kesrehab@comcast.net to receive meeting and event notices.

Please visit our website for more information about our organization and how to join at aalncpittsburgh.org.

Don't forget to check us out on LinkedIn and Facebook!

Editor Stephanie Kress would like to thank Audrey Lalli , Donna Falcone, and Tiffany Tomkowitz for their wonderful contributions to this edition of the LiNC

Our Latest Social

On Wednesday, August 14, 2019, the AALNC– Pittsburgh Chapter hosted our August Networking Dinner at LeMont Restaurant. To celebrate our 30-year anniversary, President, Tiffany Tomkowitz presented the Proclamation of our group's day in the City of Pittsburgh and welcomed 16 of our Past Presidents, reflecting on the foundation they provided to pave the way for our amazing organization. The evening was filled with laughter, wonderful memories and excitement for our future success, as we overlooked our beautiful city.

