

In Memoriam

Dr. Marcia DeCann Andersen

1942 – 2012



Dr. Marcia Andersen – a passionate and tireless crusader for the professional practice of nursing – died peacefully, Tuesday, June 5th, surrounded by friends and family, at the age of 69.

A pioneer in the field of nursing, Dr. Andersen was the first ever to receive a Doctor of Philosophy in nursing from the University of Michigan. Her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing were also from the University of Michigan.

“Marcia was a brilliant nurse and a true trailblazer in the field,” said Dean Kathleen Potempa. “She made significant contributions in nursing and patient care during her life time and her work will continue to guide us into the future.”

Dr. Andersen spent the beginning of her career focused on developing the Personalized Nursing LIGHT Practice Model of care for treating substance abusers. Her LIGHT Model of care is based on the Nursing Science of Unitary Human Beings proposed by her longtime spiritual and philosophical mentor, Dr. Martha Rogers of New York University. The goal of the LIGHT model is to assist addicts to improve their health and well-being so that they can begin to heal themselves and decrease their drug use.

Dr. Andersen and her LIGHT Model have made a significant impact on the University of Michigan School of Nursing [UMSN] faculty and students. “I have many memories of Marcia, and her Personalized Nursing LIGHT Practice Model has guided me in my teaching as well as my personal life,” said Dr. Linda Strodman, assistant professor. “Her video about the model is superb and the communication skills that she demonstrated in that film are valuable in today's practice.”



Dr. Andersen founded two nursing corporations in Michigan to use her nursing model of care in practice with men and women addicted to drugs and alcohol. One of the corporations, The Personalized Nursing LIGHT House is a licensed, accredited, drug free, intensive outpatient program with a home that has clinics in Ann Arbor and Plymouth. The Personalized Nursing LIGHT House currently houses and treats 100 clients each day.

Personalized Nursing Corporation, a Nursing Research Institute, provided outreach treatment to substance abusers on the streets of inner city Detroit, while nurses and others researched and proved the effectiveness of The Personalized Nursing LIGHT Model of care in many

federally funded clinical research projects. The company had offices in New York City, Baltimore, MD, and Detroit, MI.

Dr. Andersen developed connections with her patients and wanted to help them even after they completed their addiction treatment. So, she opened and ran the Northern Lights Restaurant, to provide employment for individuals who were transitioning away from addiction.

A Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, she served on the UMSN faculty and received the 1994 Distinguished Alumni Award. She also chaired the graduate nursing faculty at Wayne State University.

Even after her time at UMSN, she would return as a guest lecturer. "She enjoyed interacting with our students and brought her own unique energy with her to light up the room when she taught," remembers Dr. Cynthia Arslanian-Engoren, associate professor. "She was extremely generous with her time and talents."

Dr. Andersen has given many presentations locally, nationally and internationally and authored numerous peer-reviewed articles and chapters in books related to her innovative and effective nursing approaches for substance abuse treatment.

She spent the last several years in Idaho to be closer to her two daughters and six grandchildren. While there, she continued her professional and personal development studying the healing powers of native plants, and became known as the "wilderness nurse."

After witnessing patients struggle with finding access to affordable healthcare for years, Andersen was interested in studying the types of natural remedies found in the West that could help heal infections and improve people's health and well-being.

Andersen developed an herbal medicine chart -- now in color print and titled "The Last Resort" -- that describes how lay people can heal infections with medicinal plants and foods in the kitchen, garden and growing wild in the West.

Of her journey from the inner city to the outdoors of Idaho, Andersen said in an article in the Post Register. "You're always given the next step. It only looks like a path when you look back."

Dr. Andersen's passing is a great loss not only for the nursing community, but also for the many lives that she touched along her journey, as a therapist, educator, researcher, mentor, friend and the best nurse that one can ever imagine. May her spirit live on in all the people that she has touched.

