

Canadian Palliative Care Nursing Association

2021 Leadership Award

The Leadership Award is to honour a member of the Canadian Palliative Care Nursing Association (CPCNA), whose practice reflects components of the mission and purpose of the CPCNA.

The Canadian Palliative Care Nursing Association Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Michelle O'Rourke RN MA from Chatham, Ontario is the **recipient of the CPCNA 2021 Leadership Award!** Michelle has demonstrated leadership in a variety of capacities over the course of her career, specifically in regard to her support of patients and families, as well as support of palliative care nurses and teams.

Michelle O'Rourke has made a lifetime of outstanding contributions to the field of hospice and palliative care nursing. From delivering palliative care in the emergency room to planning the construction and opening of Chatham-Kent Hospice of which she is currently the Director. Michelle has been a leader in the growth of hospice and palliative care education through the development of the Parish Nursing education program through St. Peter's Seminary. She continues to facilitate education programs through Selah Resources, which she founded. Michelle is a frequent speaker and educator in the areas of caregiving, resilience, spirituality and palliative care. She assists organizations to support their professional and volunteer caregivers, and is a consultant with the Henri Nouwen Society for their Courage for Caregivers initiative.



Michelle's passion for palliative care is shown through her tireless support and strengthening of nurses. She is a prolific author who demonstrates a deep knowledge and understanding of end-of-life which she shares through her books: *Befriending Death: Henri Nouwen and a Spirituality of Dying* (2009), *Embracing the End of Life: Help for Those who Accompany the Dying* (2012) and *Healthy Caregiving: Perspectives for Caring Professionals* in company with Henri JM Nouwen (2020). Each of these books focuses on the art of communicating a holistic and caring presence, and the many exquisite gifts and benefits of living well for those living with a life-threatening disease. Her latest book draws threads from the evolving research on caring for the caregiver. This is so timely, as one of the main concerns that we hear from caregivers across Canada is their experience of deep fatigue.

Since the inception of CPCNA, Michelle has been committed to supporting palliative care nurses. Without hesitation, she agreed to facilitate CPCNA Town Halls held virtually throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. She has continued as a volunteer Member of CPCNA to offer these monthly free events. Michelle is an excellent organizer and speaker. She has helped prepare for the events, but she also provides either an inspiring message or a lesson about a timely topic to help stimulate discussion with the participants. In the fall of 2021, she identified the need for education about self-compassion and developed and offered a series to address this need. These events have been reported as invaluable to

those that attend and are a unique offering to support Members and non-Members alike. These Town Halls started in March 2020 before Town Halls were as commonplace as they are now and have carried on monthly for the past 16 months. Michelle's dedication to these events has provided nurses a safe space to connect and support the Purpose and Mission of the CPCNA.

Michelle's renowned excellence has been recognized by awards such as the Alumni of the Century Award from Assumption University, and the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Tri-Board Award of Excellence. She has also been recognized by the Catholic Press Association for three of her books.

Michelle is collaborative and compassionate. She is a leader, an educator, and an author. Michelle is helping us all to Live Well, Die Well and Nurse Well. It is with gratitude to her for the work that she has done and continues to do, that we congratulate Michelle as the **recipient of this year's CPCNA Leadership Award.**