Three Members Receive NCRA’s Highest Honors

Awards Ceremony Held at the National Cancer Registrars Association’s Annual Conference in Denver, CO

Alexandria, VA, May 22, 2019 — The National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) acknowledged three exceptional members at its Annual Educational Conference in Denver, CO, on May 22, 2019. Andrea Sipin-Baliwas, MS, CPHI, CTR, received the April Fritz Outstanding New Professional Award; Dianne M. Cleveland, RHIA, CTR, was honored with the Distinguished Member Award; and Theresa M. Vallerand, BGS, CTR, was presented with the Volunteer Excellence Award. Established in 1987, the NCRA Awards Program highlights outstanding contributions to the cancer registry profession and the association.

Andrea Sipin-Baliwas, MS, CPHI, CTR — April Fritz Outstanding New Professional Award

Andrea Sipin-Baliwas is the 2019 recipient of the April Fritz Outstanding New Professional Award, acknowledging her extraordinary commitment and embrace of the cancer registry profession. (In 2018, NCRA renamed its Outstanding New Professional Award to honor the legacy of April Fritz, CTR—a beloved colleague who played a pivotal role advancing cancer surveillance and the cancer registry profession.) Sipin-Baliwas started her career in 2014, enrolling in the Cancer Information Management Program at Santa Barbara City College. Soon after, she interned at the Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program (LACSP) and quickly moved to its Quality Control Department. She earned her CTR credential that same year. In 2017, Sipin-Baliwas was promoted to Registry Manager, the highest leadership position in the LACSP. Her exemplary cancer registry skills in conjunction with her highly effective written and oral communications skills explain why she has been so successful in managing a 25-person department. These talents were also showcased recently when Sipin-Baliwas played a key role in preparing a registry funding application that secured $43 million.

In addition to her work at the LACSP, she has become a leader in the California Cancer Registry, serving on many workgroups demonstrating her problem solving skills and can-do attitude — an attitude that has earned her moniker, “Amazing Andrea.” She has also been active in NCRA. As chair of its Social Media Committee Chair, Sipin-Baliwas updated the organization’s social media policies and procedures and guided staff efforts to increase NCRA’s social media presence. She also serves on the NCRA Editorial Advisory Board as a Peer Reviewer for the Journal of Registry Management. As a colleague noted in support of her nomination, “Having personally worked in the central cancer registry for 42 years, I have never observed a CTR with such compelling motivation to so quickly perform at the highest level.”

Dianne Cleveland, RHIA, CTR — Distinguished Member Award

The recipient of the 2019 NCRA Distinguished Member Award is Dianne Cleveland. With almost 40 years in the cancer registry profession, Cleveland has built an impressive resume. She began her career working as a hospital registrar in a single-person registry and has since crafted a diverse and successful career marked by a willingness to embrace new technologies and mentor the next generation. Cleveland has managed registries at numerous CoC-approved programs and is a former CoC-trained consultant. She has held roles and led initiatives in data management, analysis, and quality assurance. In 1999, Cleveland entered the software arena, holding positions as both a software support specialist and sales manager. She has worked with staffing companies for the last decade, serving as director of registry services and manager of CoC accreditation.

Her career is impressive, but what sets her apart is her work in supporting the profession at the state and national levels. Cleveland currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Texas Tumor Registrars Association (TxTRA), a position she has held on three separate occasions (2007, 2013, and 2015). She has also served as the association’s Long Range Planning Committee Chair, Website Co-Chair, and Program Chair. Her commitment to NCRA began in 2003. Cleveland has served on the Board in various capacities, including Director of Recruitment and Retention, Secretary, and President. She is currently serving on the Governance Planning and
Evaluation Committee (GPEC) and as a Director on the NCRA Education Foundation. A colleague who endorsed her nomination stated, “Dianne has touched many registrars across the spectrum of her various duties. Her pursuit of quality and dedication to the education and mentorship of fellow registrars has made her a valued resource for registrars.”

Theresa Vallerand, BGS, CTR — Volunteer Excellence Award
Theresa (Terry) Vallerand is the recipient of the 2019 NCRA Volunteer Excellence Award. She is being acknowledged for her proven commitment to the cancer registry profession through her NCRA volunteer work. Vallerand first served as Chair of the association’s Ethics Committee and then Editor for The Connection, NCRA’s member newsletter. She was elected to the Board of Directors as the Public Relations Chair in 2012. This was a time when social media was in its infancy, so she helped craft the early policies and procedures to guide the organization’s efforts in this new communications arena. Vallerand was then appointed to serve as Chair of the Policies & Procedures Committee, a position charged with ensuring the organization is conducting its business in accordance with the guidance set forth by the Board. She also participated in the development of the NCRA’s most recent Strategic Plan which began implementation in 2019.

One of Vallerand most important volunteer positions has been as NCRA’s liaison to the American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) – a three-year position she was appointed to first in 2014 and again in 2017. In this role, she represents the interests of the NCRA membership to the AJCC on issues such as cancer staging education, development of new methods and procedures for cancer staging data collection, and the use of cancer staging information. In addition, she provides support and expertise in cancer registry technology to the AJCC. To help communicate the AJCC’s 8th edition changes, Vallerand has served on multiple expert panels and authored numerous white papers and articles. She has worked tirelessly over the last five years to keep members informed and to support registrars in the transition from the 7th to the 8th edition of the cancer staging system. In support of her nomination, a colleague reported, “Terry has demonstrated that she is an outstanding member who has a history of serving with excellence, dedication, and purpose. NCRA is so grateful to have such a committed representative serving as its members’ liaison to the AJCC.”

During the awards ceremony, NCRA also acknowledged the authors of two Journal of Registry Management papers. The Best Paper award was presented to Yan Yuan, Sana Amjad, Angela Eckstrand, Rob Sevick, James Scott, Shehnum Devji, Christine Bertrand, Mary Jane King, Victor Brunka, Emily Maplethorpe, Emily Walker, Thierry Muanza, and Faith Davis for the article entitled, On Capturing Radiological Diagnoses of Brain Tumors to Provide Complete Population Data in Cancer Registries in Canada. An Honorable Mention award was presented to Erin Cook, Susan Gershman, and Richard Knowlton for their article, Cancers Among the Oldest Old in Massachusetts from 2004–2014.

To learn more about NCRA’s awards program, go to www.ncra-usa.org/awards.

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About the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA)
NCRA is a non-profit organization that represents more than 6,000 cancer registry professionals and Certified Tumor Registrars. The mission of NCRA is to promote education, credentialing, and advocacy for cancer registry professionals. Cancer registrars are data information specialists that capture a complete history, diagnosis, treatment, and health status for every cancer patient in the U.S. The data provides essential information to researchers, healthcare providers, and public health officials to better monitor and advance cancer treatments, conduct research, and improve cancer prevention and screening programs. For more information about NCRA, visit www.ncra-usa.org and www.CancerRegistryEducation.org.