

The Loss of a Neonatal Nursing Superstar and Dear Friend

On July 9, 2020, Sandra Gardner, RN, MS, PNP passed away unexpectedly. I wanted to share some memories of a great friend and neonatal nurse.

In a message to me after Sandy's passing, Jean Grazel stated it perfectly... Neonatal Nursing has lost a SUPER STAR! A Neonatal Nursing PIONEER, GREAT LADY and my very dear friend, Sandra L. Gardner (Sandy, to me.)

From the moment we met and I picked her up at the airport to speak at our conference, we both had on slinky material pants and tops in cobalt blue, multi-colored gemstone jewelry, painted red nails, with her platinum blonde curly hair pulled up to my dark curly hair put up. We knew from that moment we were going to be BEST friends and learned that we were so much alike....neonatal obsessed, salty language, loved to laugh and always have a good time and we both were full of it! She yelled at me all the time to write which I hated. I told her I could write great neonatal songs for the conferences where we spoke and was the entertainer but SHE was the WRITER EXTRAORDINAIRE!

Sandra's professional timeline and accomplishments:

Education:

1967 - Diploma RN - St Mary and Elizabeth Hospital

1973 - BSN - Magna cum laude from Spalding College

1975 - MSN - University of Colorado

1978 - Pediatric Nurse Practitioner - University of Colorado

Career:

1967-1971 Premature Coordinator - Methodist Evangelical Hospital. Louisville, KY

1971-1973 Charge Nurse Children's Hospital Louisville, KY

1973-1974 Staff nurse/ Charge nurse Children's Hospital Denver, CO

1974-1976 Perinatal Outreach Coordinator Children's Hospital Denver, CO

Since 1975 Founding member Colorado Care Council

1976-1979 Assist. Professor University of Colorado School of Nursing

1977-1979 Co-founder, Vice Chairman, Board of Directors Denver Birth Center

Since 1980 Director and Consultant "Professional Outreach Consultation" (company) Aurora, CO

Since 1982 Founding Director "Neonatal Nursing Education Foundation" Aurora, CO

NPDPA - Nurses' Professional Development and Practice Association

Vivian Dianne Brown and Sandra L. Gardner

Promoting practice change through policies and procedures: Management of Hypoglycemia, care and Handling of the Extremely Low Birthweight Infant and many other policies and procedures and care plans.

Abbott Labs Sandy worked with Abbott Labs as a presenter around the nation. She wrote articles for Nurse Currents by Abbott

Ex : She and Vivian co-authored Disruptive Behavior in the Workplace: No Longer Tolerated!

Army Sandra was a neonatal educator for the Army, going overseas to educate staff in their military hospitals. She often served as a nationally recognized expert witness on the standard of care in neonatal and pediatric nursing.

Memberships/Awards/ Publications:

*American Nurses Association

*Neonatal Association of Neonatal Nurses

1978 Gerald L. Hencemann Award - March of Dimes Denver, CO

1986 American Nurses Association Book of the Year

Books: Co-Editors until Dr Merenstein's death in 2007 then Sandra continued the publication.

Merenstein & Gardner's Handbook of Neonatal Intensive Care, 5th up to 9th editions.

"Legal Aspects of Maternal-Child Nursing Practice", Sandra L. Gardner, Mary I. Enzman Hagedorn published 1997

"Care of the Well Newborn", Sandra L. Gardner, B.J. Snell published 2016

Wrote and published many, many chapters in books and articles in professional journals.

Conducted many lectures at national and international conferences.

I am sure that I have not covered all that she accomplished but she has left an amazing legacy for Neonatal Nursing. She LOVED her family and her little dogs. She was an amazing skier. She LOVED to travel and her vacation home in Arizona. We did enjoy a glass of red wine. You are deeply missed!

So cheers to you, my dear friend, for your friendship and all the amazing knowledge that you imparted to so many neonatal nurses and colleagues over the years.

LuAnn Hall, MSN, CNS