



# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING

*transforming health policy and practice through nursing knowledge*

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## **American Academy of Nursing Recognizes Four Nurses with the *COVID-19 Courage Award* for Their Exceptional Work to Save Lives, Advance Health Equity, and Protect Communities**

*The Academy, with Support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Honors the Courageous, Compassionate, and Creative Contributions of Nurses during the Coronavirus Pandemic*

**Washington, D.C. (October 22, 2020)** — Today, the American Academy of Nursing (Academy) announced the recipients for its *COVID-19 Courage Awards*. Ukamaka Oruche, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, FAAN, Marissa Pietrolungo, MSN, RN, CCRN, Doris Grinspun, PhD, RN, FAAN, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), O.ONT., and Jason Farley, PhD, MPH, ANP-BC, FAAN, FAANP, AACRN, were selected for their incredible contributions in the critical areas of innovation, leadership, policy, and science.

This award, made possible through the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), includes \$8,000 in funding for each awardee to be used for their professional development in order to further their impact. Dr. Oruche, Ms. Pietrolungo, Dr. Grinspun, and Dr. Farley will be highlighted during the Academy's virtual [Transforming Health, Driving Policy Conference](#) on October 29, 2020. The story of each awardee's work during the pandemic will help showcase the exceptional bravery and determination that nurses have demonstrated throughout 2020.

"The Academy has a strong tradition of celebrating the achievements of exceptional nurses," said President Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN. "Therefore, it is incredibly rewarding to be able to acknowledge and recognize these inspiring, courageous nurses and their commendable work to address the coronavirus pandemic. Their exemplary service to their patients, communities, and colleagues represents the best of the profession in the face of the most challenging circumstances."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined and exacerbated the already deep health disparities across our nation," said Susan Hassmiller PhD, RN, FAAN, Senior Adviser for Nursing at RWJF. "It has also made clear the integral role nurses play in addressing those deep inequities. These courageous nurses have worked tirelessly—despite great personal risk—throughout this pandemic to do just that."

**Ukamaka Oruche**, Associate Professor and Director of Global Programs at Indiana University School of Nursing, has been selected as the recipient of the *COVID-19 Courage Award in Innovation*. As a champion for children with mental health needs, their families, and professional caregivers, Dr. Oruche exhibited creativity by developing six innovative educational products for public use during the pandemic. The tips for managing children with behavioral challenges, as well as self-care guides for parents, frontline nurses, and underserved communities were strategically disseminated via publicly accessible online platforms. Her tips for parents and guardians of children with emotional and behavioral challenges video is available on the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration [Be Well Indiana website](#). Dr. Oruche's innovative spirit epitomizes the ingenuity of the profession.

**Marissa Pietrolungo**, a cardiac intensive care nurse at Temple University Hospital, has been selected as the recipient of the *COVID-19 Courage Award in Leadership*. Ms. Pietrolungo volunteered to work full-time in the Boyer COVID Intensive Care Unit (ICU), taking on leadership roles and supporting colleagues and patients under incredibly difficult circumstances. She proactively aided fellow nurses with patient

care, while reassuring and encouraging her colleagues to volunteer for the unit. To ease concerns of patient family members who could not visit their loved ones, Ms. Pietrolungo bridged the emotional gap by using technology to help families connect with each other. She took extra steps, such as providing oral hygiene care, in a very busy ICU to let patients know they were not alone during their end of life, exemplifying compassionate care.

**Doris Grinspun**, Chief Executive Officer of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), has been selected as the recipient of the *COVID-19 Courage Award in Policy*. Dr. Grinspun deployed her expertise translating evidence to influence policy decisions. A seasoned healthcare leader, she engaged with Ontario's premier, minister of health, and top officials on the COVID-19 response plan for Canada's largest province. The most outspoken and profiled nurse in Canadian media, she has mobilized RNAO, nurses and the public to ensure policies are evidence-based and draw from nurses' compassion to protect vulnerable populations. She courageously advocated for the protection of residents in long-term care nursing homes, bringing about the reunification of families who had lost their right to visit due to COVID-19; worked with her team and First Nations organizations to protect their communities and prevent spread; advocated for persons experiencing homelessness; and insisted on the safe reopening of schools.

**Jason Farley**, DNP/PhD and Post-Doctoral Program Director, Adult Nurse Practitioner in Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins Medicine, Director, The REACH Initiative, and Clinical Core Co-Director, JHU Center for AIDS Research (CFAR), is the recipient of the *COVID-19 Courage Award in Science*. Dr. Farley observed the dwindling personal protective equipment (PPE) supply and challenges to obtain PPE while volunteering in the COVID-19 testing tents. He searched for PPE cleaning and re-use methods and worked with a team from Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering and University of Maryland to create a testing booth to reduce exposure of clinical personnel. This scientific innovation has been critical, as it has allowed testing and research to move from the hospital to the community. Dr. Farley was also a co-recipient of a Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics for COVID-19 (RADxUp) NIH grant as a Center for AIDS Research Supplement and leads the NIH-funded JHU Coronavirus Prevention Network.

The Academy thanks the dedicated task force who selected these incredible nurses: Felesia Bowen, DNP, PhD, APRN, FAAN, Jessie Casida, PhD, MS, RN, APN-C, FAAN, Tommy Dickinson, PhD, RN, FAAN, Anne Gross, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Mary Gullatte, PhD, RN, ANP-BC, AOCN, FAAN, Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Maureen McCausland, DNSc, RN, FAAN. [View more](#) details about the award, including the [criteria](#).

The video featuring the COVID-19 Courage Award winners will be released to the public after it is presented during the Academy's [2020 Transforming Health, Driving Policy Conference](#), occurring virtually October 29-31, 2020.

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### **About the American Academy of Nursing**

[The American Academy of Nursing](#) serves the public by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy Fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally. With more than 2,700 Fellows, the Academy represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

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**About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

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