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## **ANCC Mourns Loss of Original Magnet™ Researcher: Mabel A. Wandelt, PhD, RN, FAAN**

Dr. Mabel A. Wandelt died at the age of 91, on Thursday, November 20, 2008.

As the Director of the Center for Health Care Research and Evaluation at the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Wandelt was part of the American Academy of Nursing's Task Force on Nursing Practice in Hospitals. This team researched and wrote "Magnet Hospitals: Attraction and Retention of Professional Nurses," the seminal publication on the Magnet Recognition Program®. Dr. Wandelt oversaw the "execution of the mechanics of the study survey, including preparation of materials, mail and telephone communications related to data gathering, reception and organization of all data, and preparation of the basic report." She is noted for having worked many months beyond her planned retirement date in order to bring the project to conclusion.

According to co-author Dr. Margaret L. (Maggie) McClure, EdD, RN, FAAN, it was Dr. Wandelt's experience in doing research on the turnover of staff nurses in Texas hospitals that led the American Academy of Nursing (the Academy) to charter the study that would lead to the creation of the Magnet Recognition Program. "Dr. Wandelt told the task force at our very first meeting about an important observation she had made: when she had been collecting her data, she would often be in a town, working with a hospital that was having recruitment and retention difficulties, only to discover that a neighboring hospital was not having the same problems. Like any good academic, this phenomenon piqued her intellectual curiosity. The more we discussed this, the more we realized that the reasons that people stay in their jobs had never been studied -- a major gap in our knowledge and understanding. By the end of the day, we had made the decision to propose to the Academy board that we be permitted to conduct a nationwide study of this vital subject. And the rest is history," says Dr. McClure.

In 1997, Dr. Wandelt was recognized by the American Academy of Nursing as a Living Legend for her many contributions to the profession and our society.

In 2007, Dr. Wandelt was part of the team honored with winning the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Magnet Prize for extraordinary innovations that transform work environments. It was awarded to the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) for its research that led to the Magnet Recognition Program. Dr. Wandelt was one of the four mentioned for the distinguished work, known as the "leavers and stayers" study.

Dr. Wandelt published prolifically in the fields of nursing education, patient care, quality assurance for nursing care, nursing employment, accurate patient medication dosing, and innovations in nursing education administration. She served as consultant to many universities and public health agencies around the world for the development of nursing education and nursing research programs, and the development of audit instruments for measuring the quality of nursing care, most notably in nursing homes.

Dr. Wandelt received her Diploma in Nursing from Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago in 1938 and a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Nursing from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan in 1944. In 1948 she received a Master of Public Health and in 1954 a Doctorate in Education, both from the University of Michigan. While continuing her education from 1938 to 1958, Dr. Wandelt held a number of nursing positions including 15 months with the Army Nurse Corps as a 2nd Lieutenant, three years with the Veterans Administration in Washington, D.C. as a specialist in Tuberculosis and Public Health Nursing, and four years as Assistant Chief of Nursing Education at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Kerrville, Texas.

In 1958, Dr. Wandelt joined the faculty at Wayne State University as an Associate Professor and later full Professor teaching Nursing Research and doing research. American Nurses Credentialing Center's Past President Patricia Yoder-Wise was one of Dr. Wandelt's students at Wayne State University. She recalls



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that Dr. Wandelt's "Mabel's Labels for Tables" taught her how to label any data table. Yoder-Wise remembers that although Dr. Wandelt seemed stern, she had a good sense of humor and made amusing comments when a colleague turned in a paper with holes punched in the right margin as well as the left.

In 1973, Dr. Wandelt moved on to the University of Delaware as an Assistant Dean and Professor of Nursing, serving a year as Acting Dean. Then in 1977, Dr. Wandelt joined the School of Nursing at the University of Texas at Austin as Professor and Director for Research. In 1982 she retired and became Professor Emeritus at the UT School of Nursing.

"She will be missed by her many nursing colleagues and friends", says Magnet Recognition Program® Director Karen Drenkard, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CPHQ, FAAN

#### **About the Magnet Recognition Program®**

The Magnet Recognition Program® was developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to recognize health care organizations that provide nursing excellence. The program also provides a vehicle for disseminating successful nursing practices and strategies.

Recognizing quality patient care, nursing excellence, and innovations in professional nursing practice, the Magnet Recognition Program provides consumers with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of care that they can expect to receive. When U.S. News & World Report publishes its annual showcase of "America's Best Hospitals", being a Magnet™ facility contributes to the total score for quality of inpatient care. Of the hospitals listed on the exclusive 2008 Honor Roll rankings (July 10, 2008), seven of the top ten were Magnet hospitals.

#### **About ANCC**

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), provides individuals and organizations throughout the nursing profession with the resources they need to achieve practice excellence. ANCC's internationally renowned credentialing programs certify nurses in specialty practice areas; recognize healthcare organizations for promoting safe, positive work environments through the Magnet Recognition Program® and the Pathway to Excellence Program™; and accredit providers of continuing nursing education. In addition, ANCC provides leading-edge information and education services and products to support its core credentialing programs. [www.nursecredentialing.org](http://www.nursecredentialing.org)