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## ORA L. STRICKLAND

PhD, DSc (Hon), RN, FAAN

### *The Researcher*

“You can be anything in nursing that you want to be.” Those are the words that Ora Strickland, a nursing professor and research specialist, has lived by throughout her career.

As a young nurse fresh out of college, Ora imagined she would always be taking care of patients at the bedside. In fact, she enjoyed patient contact so much she was reprimanded for spending too much time with them. Early in her career, she worked as a neonatal intensive care nurse taking care of infants, which motivated her to codevelop a videotape designed to train doctors and nurses to provide emotional support to parents with high-risk neonates.

Recognizing the need to touch more lives, Ora decided to take what she learned in the clinical setting and apply it to research. Her research projects explore the commonalities among patients, particularly African Americans, to improve care. Some of her studies have earned national media attention. Her most recent studies have probed coronary heart disease in premenopausal African American women; the integration of home care for sickle cell patients; premenstrual syndrome in women; and hormone replacement therapy as a measure to prevent heart disease and colon cancer. She was also the first researcher in the United States to track and document the symptoms of expectant fathers.

“Our patients provide us with so much knowledge,” the Emory University professor said. “We can learn so much about their bodies and their health by observing.”

Ora believes health care must be a collaborative process. The key role for nurses, she said, is to assist patients in making the best decisions by providing health information. “Nurses make a tremendous impact on other people’s lives on a daily basis, whether you are bedside, in the classroom, or in the laboratory,” said the enthusiastic doll collector.

Consistent with her belief that God placed us here because we are unfinished, she is completely devoted to her 13- and 15-year-old sons. Her philosophy as a professional woman and mother is simple: “Careers are important, but if you fail at being a mother, then you fail generations to come.”