

2023 NURSING *Annual Report*



RWJBarnabas
HEALTH

**Robert Wood Johnson
University Hospital
Hamilton**

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FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Message from our Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Nursing Officer

It comes as no surprise to me that for the 22nd consecutive year, registered nurses were ranked as the most honest and ethical profession in the United States according to Gallup's annual poll. At Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (RWJUH Hamilton), our nurses are the pillars of the care we provide, working tirelessly to not only meet but also exceed the complex demands of an ever-changing health care industry.

I am so excited to share with you our RWJUH Hamilton 2023 nursing achievements. We are especially proud of our nurses and their commitment to providing quality care, attaining certification, pursuing higher education and advancing the profession of nursing.

In 2023, RWJUH Hamilton onboarded 18 nurses in our residency program. A total of 107 nurses entered or advanced on the nursing clinical ladder, numerous nurses achieved advanced nursing degrees and our overall nurse turnover rates decreased. Our nurses participated in research studies and presented at a national conference. We also saw an increase in our patient satisfaction scores as it relates to nursing communication. We have maintained a zero rate for ventilator-associated pneumonia for 12+ years. In addition, our nursing leaders and staff continue to have a laser focus on all quality and safety indicators through a system-wide collaborative approach.

Improving the overall health of our community is at the heart of everything we do. Our nurses continue to be vibrant partners in the communities we serve, providing education, disease management resources and screenings that reach thousands of area residents year after year.

Recognizing that the health needs of our community have shifted over time and that many of our patients are now older adults, our nurses have been instrumental in tailoring the evidence-based, interdisciplinary approaches we provide to best meet their needs. This is why we are especially proud to carry the Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) designation in recognition of our commitment to patient- and family-centered care and creating a positive experience for the senior population.

Looking ahead, as I take on the role of Chief Administrative Officer, I'm excited to see the progress that will unfold with Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC, at the helm as the newly appointed Chief Nursing Officer at RWJUH Hamilton. I have been very proud to serve in this role, and I'm confident that Dawn will continue to advance the nursing legacy we have worked diligently to create for more than 50 years.

The future of nursing at RWJUH Hamilton shines brightly. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Breza". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

Chief Administrative Officer
Chief Nursing Officer (2010-2023)

NURSING LEADERSHIP



Joan Bercari, MSN, RN
Vice President, Quality and Patient Safety Officer



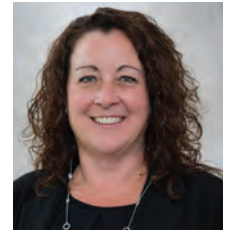
Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC
Assistant Vice President, Nursing



Meghan McCord-Zaro, MSJ, BSN, RN, CPHRM
Assistant Vice President, Risk Management



Tracee Bachman, BSN, RN-BC
Director, Quality



Amy German, MSN, RN, OCN
Director, Cancer Center



Erin Glospe, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN-K
Director, Infection Prevention



Stephanie Harvilla, BSN, RN, CNOR
Director, Cardiology Services



Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN
Director, Emergency Services and Critical Care



Connie Mocerri, MSN, AGNP-C
Director, Disease Management and Stroke Program



Jennifer Pirozzi, MSN, RN, CNOR
Director, Patient Care Perioperative Support Services



Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC
Director, Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research



Roseann Baker, MSN, RN
Manager, Emergency Services and Critical Care



Jacqueline Ciccarelli, MSN, RN, CCRN-K
Manager, Magnet Program and Nursing Performance Improvement



Christina Delate, BSN, RN, CNOR
Manager, Operating Room Services



Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN
Manager, Medical-Surgical Units



Ceara Philips, BSN, RN
Manager, Telemetry Units



Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC
Orthopedic Program Coordinator



Sandra Haas, BSN, RN, CBN
Bariatric Program Coordinator



Kelly Knox, BSN, RN, CWCN
Wound Care Specialist



Ann Mancuso, MSN, RN, CHFRN
Heart Failure Program Coordinator



About RWJUH Hamilton

Founded in 1971, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton is a 248-bed community hospital located in Mercer County, New Jersey. It is a proud member of RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH), the largest, most comprehensive academic health care system in New Jersey.

RWJUH Hamilton provides a network of comprehensive health care services including hospital care, prevention and wellness, primary care and specialty practices, and outpatient diagnostic and treatment services to the community – along with nursing and allied health training for 13 surrounding colleges and universities. The hospital is an affiliate of Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey in New Brunswick, the state’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. Patients also have access to the latest surgical technologies, such as minimally invasive and robotic surgery for general, bariatric, colorectal, gynecologic, orthopedic and urologic procedures.

As part of its national recognitions for outstanding safety and quality, RWJUH Hamilton has received 13 “A” Hospital Safety Grades from the Leapfrog Group, the gold standard in health care safety. In addition, the Joint Commission has awarded RWJUH Hamilton a Top Performer for stroke care, spine surgery and hip and knee replacements.

In 2021, RWJUH Hamilton was designated for the first time as a Magnet® hospital by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The hospital received six exemplars for extraordinary nursing work in patient care, quality outcomes and patient experience.

RWJUH Hamilton served nearly 7,000 inpatients in 2023, with more than 34,700 patients visiting the Emergency Department. The hospital performed nearly 5,300 surgical procedures. More than 1,400 patients underwent procedures in the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, with that number continuing to increase since the hospital began performing elective angioplasties. In addition, the Cancer Center had more than 18,000 patient visits to the radiation, infusion and medical practice areas.



Mission, Vision and Values

The nursing team at RWJUH Hamilton embraces the new mission, vision and values of RWJBarnabas Health that were adopted in January 2024:



Our Mission: We are an academic health system, partnering with our communities to build and sustain a healthier New Jersey.



Our Vision: RWJBarnabas Health will be the premier health care destination providing patient-centered, high-quality academic medicine in a compassionate and equitable manner, while delivering a best-in-class work experience to every member of the team.



Our Values:

- **Accountability:** An acceptance of responsibility for honest and ethical conduct towards others.
Synonyms: responsibility, liability
- **Compassion:** Sympathetic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.
Synonym: understanding
- **Curiosity:** A strong desire to know or learn something.
Synonyms: interest, inquisitiveness
- **Empathy:** The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
Synonyms: sensitivity towards, understanding of
- **Excellence:** The quality of being outstanding or extremely good.
Synonyms: greatness, superiority
- **Kindness:** The quality of being friendly, generous and considerate.
Synonym: selflessness
- **Respect:** A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements.
Synonyms: esteem, regard
- **Teamwork:** The combined action of a group of people, especially when effective and efficient.
Synonyms: partnership, synergy

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Transformational Leadership

While nursing leadership at RWJUH Hamilton is truly engaged with staff, all nurses at the hospital are called upon to be transformational leaders. They have the ability to effect change through their involvement on various fronts, from committee participation to influencing policies and practices that impact all levels of care.

Joint Commission Reaccreditation

As part of a voluntary triennial reaccreditation process, the Joint Commission held an onsite survey at RWJUH Hamilton from July 11 to 14, 2023. Preparation for the survey required the engagement and collaboration of team members across the hospital, and nurses were heavily involved in ensuring compliance with Joint Commission standards.

RWJUH clinical nurse educators helped create educational plans specific to each unit, facilitated trainings related to competencies and conducted rounds to spot check charts. Nurse managers regularly attended Joint Commission readiness meetings to review and assess past survey results, patient safety topics and other priorities.

The nursing team also prepared for the Joint Commission's tracer methodology, which follows the experience of care, treatment or services for patients through an organization's health care delivery process. Nursing-specific tracers include plan of care chart review, medication administration, coordination of care in handoff communication, pain assessment, discharge planning and unit performance improvement activities. During the survey's tracers, nursing staff were questioned on process and policy to assess knowledge. The site visit was successful, and the hospital received its reaccreditation announcement in September.

"Joint Commission reaccreditation underscores how the RWJUH Hamilton team continues to deliver care that meets specific standards set as benchmarks to strengthen patient safety and quality," says Joan Bercari, MSN, RN, Vice President of Quality and Patient Safety. "Accreditation supports our ability to maintain excellence in patient care."



Expanding Interventional Cardiology Services

In 2023, RWJUH Hamilton secured approvals from the New Jersey Department of Health to begin the construction of two state-of-the-art Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories. To ensure optimal patient care, nurses and other interventional cardiology staff were involved in the planning process at a granular level. This included using digital technology to determine the best possible flow of the space, providing recommendations on cabinet placement, lighting and computers, requesting patient comfort items such as additional blanket warmers and selecting design textures and color palettes.

This renovation follows several other recent interventional cardiology advances at RWJUH Hamilton, including the opening of the H.H. Tuchman Cardiac Interventional Suite (CIS) to provide modern, private patient rooms for both pre- and post-operative cardiac care. In addition, RWJUH Hamilton received approval from the New Jersey Department of Health to perform nonemergency, elective angioplasty in the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory. With both emergency and elective angioplasty capabilities, team members can not only restore blood flow to the heart in patients experiencing a heart attack, but they can also detect and treat problems before they become life-threatening.

From 2022 to 2023, the number of cases at RWJUH Hamilton more than tripled from 400 to 1,500 interventional cardiology diagnostic procedures and from 100 to 500 elective angioplasties. Additional nurses and technicians were hired to meet this demand, which underscores the need for the new Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories.

"While the new labs are being constructed, our nurses have developed innovative ways to meet patient needs in our existing space," says Stephanie Harvilla, BSN, RN, CNOR, Director of Cardiology Services. "We also developed a 12-week Cardiac Catheterization Orientation Program in which our experienced nurses provide education and training to newer nurses with a critical care background who wish to join the interventional cardiology team."

STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT



Structural Empowerment

Through supportive structures and engagement, nurses at all levels can recommend positive changes and play a role in bringing those changes to fruition through the collaborative examination of evidence-based practices. Best practices derived from this process are aimed at improving nursing practice and overall outcomes.

Professional Practice Council

The RWJUH Hamilton Professional Practice Council (PPC) encourages nurses at all levels to have a voice in their practice. It enables nurses and nursing leaders to collaborate on patient care, policies and procedures and implementation of best practices. This collaboration ultimately leads to better outcomes and enhances the quality of care that nurses provide every day. The Council empowers nurses to shape nursing practice at RWJUH Hamilton, which fosters the ability to share and celebrate successes, improve on issues that arise, facilitate change, plan for the future direction of nursing and promote continuous learning to enhance knowledge.

Shared Governance Council

Under the Professional Practice Council, the hospital's Shared Governance Council is comprised of nursing representatives from unit-based departmental councils who meet monthly with nursing leadership to exchange ideas and information that promote quality nursing care. Staff throughout the hospital can bring issues or ideas to this Council for review. The Council takes on many of these initiatives, empowering nurses at all levels to drive nursing practice. Nursing staff also participate in unit-based Shared Governance Councils.

Council chair Naykis Sarvary, BSN, RN, represents RWJUH Hamilton at RWJBH Shared Governance Council monthly meetings. In addition to sharing new knowledge and best practices with council members across the system, Shared Governance Council chairs solicit local feedback for policies and bring back insights that benefit RWJUH Hamilton nurses and lead to process improvements.

Unit-Based Practice Councils

Each nursing unit has a Unit-Based Practice Council that reports to the Shared Governance Council. These councils work on unit-based projects and identify opportunities for evidence-based practice changes and improvements. They share their recommendations at the Shared Governance Council meetings.

Performance Improvement/ Risk Management Committee

The Performance Improvement/Risk Management (PIRM) Committee is the primary coordinating committee for organizational performance and is chaired by Joan Bercari, MSN, RN, Vice President of Quality and Patient Safety. The Quality and Safety Department has the primary responsibility for supporting PIRM initiatives at RWJUH Hamilton. PIRM roles include reviewing performance measurement and assessment projects, monitoring patient-focused and organizational functions, ensuring the performance of required measurement activities, directing actions to improve performance and safety, and overseeing staff competencies.

Patient Safety Council

Led by Joan Bercari, MSN, RN, Vice President of Quality and Patient Safety, and Tracee Bachman, BSN, RN-BC, Director of Quality, the Patient Safety Council reports to the Quality and Patient Safety Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Patient Safety Council coordinates the hospital's patient safety program, conducts ongoing analysis and application of evidence-based patient safety practices to reduce the probability of adverse events, and analyzes any near misses and adverse events that occur within the facility. Members discuss medication safety, infection control and patient falls as standing agenda items in addition to topics like Joint Commission patient safety goals.





Interdisciplinary Rounding Decreases Length of Stay

RWJUH Hamilton began Interdisciplinary Team Rounds in 2023, with participation from a vast multidisciplinary team that includes physicians, clinical nurse coordinators, case managers and representatives from all ancillary departments. These rounds have focused on areas related to improving patient care and reducing length of stay, including daily collaboration, early identification and management of discharge barriers and recognition/initiation of referrals and authorizations for care transition.

“Since this initiative was implemented, we’ve seen a decrease in length of stay, a significant increase in physician engagement in rounds and improved accuracy in the documentation and use of the estimated day of discharge to guide goals of care,” says Susan Hampton, RN, CCM. “It has also highlighted the importance of focusing on each individual patient to improve the overall quality of care we deliver at RWJUH Hamilton.”

A research poster on this initiative, authored by Hampton and Samer Haddad, MD, has been accepted for inclusion at the 2024 RWJUH Hamilton Quality Fair.

2023 NURSING AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals, who received these distinct honors at an awards ceremony during National Nurses Week in May 2023.



Magnet Nurse of the Year

David Baldwin, BSN, RN, OCN, PACU

Bestowed on a staff RN who improves quality outcomes through exemplary professional practice, the Nurse of the Year Award celebrates visionary leadership, committee contributions and an unyielding commitment to obtaining and disseminating new knowledge and/or technology.



Transformational Leadership Award

Cindy Mazurkiewicz, MSN, RN, PACU

The Transformational Leadership Award recognizes a visionary, committed nurse leader who transforms the organization by leading change through effective communication, passion and motivation. Transformational leaders are known for their integrity and uphold the highest standards in all they do.



Exemplary Professional Practice Award

Heather Nolan, BSN, RN, Endoscopy

This award recognizes a staff RN who delivers exemplary evidence-based care to patients and families through the framework of the RWJUH Hamilton Professional Practice Model. Exemplary Professional Practice nurses accomplish improved workplace advocacy and self-reflection.



New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements Award

Kelly Knox, BSN, RN, CWCN, Wound Care

Recognizing a staff RN who is involved in research, evidence-based practice and/or technological innovations, this award is given to an individual who develops and implements structures and processes to integrate new knowledge into nursing practice to improve patient outcomes.



Nursing Mentor Award

Travis Overstreet, RN, Telemetry North

This award recognizes an RN who contributes to the nursing profession by guiding and supporting new team members. In imparting their knowledge and influencing nurses' career development, the awardee enhances the profession in a meaningful, measurable way.



Nursing Quality Award

Naykis Sarvary, RN, ICU

With an ongoing focus on accuracy to ensure quality performance, this awardee meticulously manages every key detail of quality measures to render the best possible care for patients and is a role model for understanding and executing quality standards.



PCT Award

Will Stevenson, Operating Room

This award is given to a PCT who demonstrates keen knowledge in their role and communicates clearly, effectively and in a timely manner. The awardee displays a passion for patient care through strong values along with the culture and commitment of RWJUH Hamilton.



Unit Secretary Award

Susan Alvarez, Telemetry North

Awarded to a Unit Secretary who demonstrates keen knowledge of their position, the recipient of this award displays a passion for their role and a stellar commitment to RWJUH Hamilton.



Physician/LIP Collaboration

Michael Gordon, MD

The recipient of this award is a physician/LIP who collaborates with nurses in a professional and positive manner to achieve a common goal of excellence in patient care.



Friend of Nursing

Kristen Crow, RN, Case Management

This award recognizes an employee or department that provides exemplary support of nursing services to advance RWJUH Hamilton's overall mission.



The DAISY Award

FOR EXTRAORDINARY NURSES

IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES

The DAISY Foundation™ was formed in 1999 by the family of J. Patrick Barnes, who passed away at age 33 due to complications of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP). Patrick's family was deeply moved by the kind and compassionate care that his nurses provided as he fought his battle with ITP, inspiring them to establish the DAISY Foundation.

The DAISY Awards® for Extraordinary Nurses recognize the education, training, skill and compassionate care that nurses provide to their patients. The program has been adopted by health care organizations around the world.

DAISY AWARDEES

Congratulations to the following RWJUH Hamilton nurses, who earned DAISY Awards in 2023.



David Kirkenir, RN, Telemetry

According to his nominator, "David is one of those special people you run across once or twice in your lifetime and not in a place you expect to find. David made me feel like he really cared for my concerns - he was always busy but managed to be there the minute you called or just to stop in if you needed something. He always took time to make me feel like I had a family member with me."



Dustin Bullock, RN, Lakefront Tower 1

According to his nurse manager, "Dustin is a true team player who is always willing to jump in to help with any situation. He supports new team members as they develop their nursing skills, including telemetry. In addition to creating a healing environment, he demonstrates an openness and comfort level in managing difficult situations and supporting patients and families with ease."

IRIS AWARDS

An acronym for Inspiring Respect in Service, the IRIS Awards recognize and honor patient care technicians for their contributions and service excellence. Congratulations to the following 2023 awardee.



Mattie Stills, Patient Sitter

As stated by a patient's family member, "When I entered the room, I heard a beautiful voice singing to my brother in the ICU. The voice belonged to Mattie, who was so kind and thoughtful and just wonderful! She had such an incredible calming presence! Mattie spent time with my brother, and each of our family members said she went beyond her duty."

Nurses Promote Community Outreach

At RWJUH Hamilton, the role of nurses in improving the health and well-being of the community is undeniable. They work throughout the community to support population health and deliver preventive health care services. Outreach efforts include a focus on cultural competency that enables effective practice with diverse individuals, families and groups within the community of care.

Health and Wellness Programs

The RWJUH Hamilton Community Education Department – which includes several full-time nurses – determines the top health needs of the surrounding communities and designs programs to address them. Each month, community members participate in more than 75 RWJUH Hamilton health and wellness programs, 11 support groups and many health screenings.

In 2023, the Community Education Department facilitated in-person, hybrid and virtual community outreach events and classes that reached more than 14,600 people. This included more than 200 education and screening events led or coordinated by nurses on topics ranging from holistic health and healthy aging to cancer prevention and chronic condition management.

Nurses Support Those in Need

Throughout 2023, RWJUH nurses and other team members participated in various drives and events to support those in need throughout the community. Together, they volunteered at two Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) dinner services, donated personal items for TASK patrons and collected more than 125 gift bags for local seniors in partnership with Truist Bank and Mobile Meals of Hamilton Township. Team members also participated in clothing drives for patients and community members and a children's book drive.

New Community Garden Opens

With the help of Community Education Department nurses and other interdisciplinary team members, RWJUH Hamilton grew its Farm to Family program with the opening of a new community garden at Bromley Field & Sports Complex in Hamilton Township. Twelve local families adopted individual plots of land in the garden for one year to learn how to grow healthy produce using sustainable gardening practices, with the guidance of master gardener and RWJUH Hamilton registered dietitian Taryn Krietzman. In addition, nurses spent nearly 40 hours helping with this initiative.

Made possible by the commitment of many local leaders, organizations and businesses, the garden expands RWJUH Hamilton's already successful Farm to Family nutrition education, health screening and food security programs hosted at Hamilton Township's Bromley Community Center and John O. Wilson Center.



Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring

RWJUH Hamilton participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's Workplace Mentoring Program, which enables students to visit real workplaces and learn through one-on-one connections with successful professionals. Through this program, 12 students from Trenton High School participated in eight weekly sessions at RWJUH Hamilton to learn about the hospital and career pathways in the health care field. The program included group educational sessions and one-on-one lunches with ten team members across disciplines, including nurses, physicians, pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists and lab staff.

"We were impressed with the interest and drive of these students and enjoyed helping them see firsthand what it's like to work in a hospital setting, including the many roles available to nurses," says Katlyn Laba, RN-BC, Clinical Coordinator, Telemetry/Ortho. "We're here to serve as a reference and resource for them in the future as well."

Devils Run Supports Healthier Communities

RWJUH Hamilton nurses and other team members participated in RWJBH's 7th Annual Running with the Devils 5K Run and Walk in partnership with the New Jersey Devils hockey team. The event supports RWJBH in providing essential care for patients and families throughout the state. Since the program's inception, it has raised more than \$500,000 to protect and build healthier communities.



Walking to Fight Heart Disease

The 2023 Central Jersey Heart Walk was held at Mercer County Community College in October. RWJUH Hamilton nurses participated across various departments, including Same Day Surgery, the Recovery Room, Interventional Radiology, Nursing Education, Oncology and Cardiology. Their efforts helped to raise funds and awareness in the fight against heart disease.



EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE



Exemplary Professional Practice

Exemplary practice at RWJUH Hamilton centers on interprofessional collaboration among disciplines, along with input from patients and families, that together support patient outcomes. Mutual respect and opinions are valued among all disciplines in the interest of achieving quality care and improving patient outcomes. The RWJUH Hamilton Professional Practice Model is the overarching framework for nurses, nursing care and interprofessional patient care, describing how nurses practice, collaborate with others and develop professionally to provide high-quality care.

Workplace Non-Violence Initiative Drill

In December, RWJUH Hamilton team members participated in an RWJBH two-day Non-Violence in the Workplace mock exercise. The first day focused on the ability of inpatient clinical care staff to recognize potentially violent and disruptive behaviors demonstrated by a family member of a patient, and the second day continued the scenario escalation with a simulated active shooter incident on the inpatient care unit. The drill involved various inpatient units as well as Security, Facilities, Environmental Services, Nursing Education, Patient Experience, Pastoral Care, Public Relations/Marketing, Information Services and Administration.

The exercise gave staff the opportunity to assess their knowledge and recognize behind-the-scenes needs during an incident, such as moving patients off of the affected unit and establishing off-site locations for communication with families and the media. Throughout the exercise, staff received education on threat identification, de-escalation, reporting and emergency management.

“The team was focused and eager to participate in the exercise, as it helped them gain a greater awareness of appropriate ways to prevent and manage a violent incident,” says Robert Field, Assistant Vice President of Safety, Security and Support Services and Co-Chair of the Non-Violence in the Workplace initiative.

Field collaborates with Nursing Education to offer a Handle with Care orientation and skills refresher course to help patient-facing staff recognize and address the signs of potential violence.

“Through various resources, our goal is to give team members the tools to de-escalate a situation before it becomes a problem,” adds Timothy Ryan, MSN, RN, CEN, Nursing Professional Development Practitioner, Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research, and a certified instructor for Handle with Care.

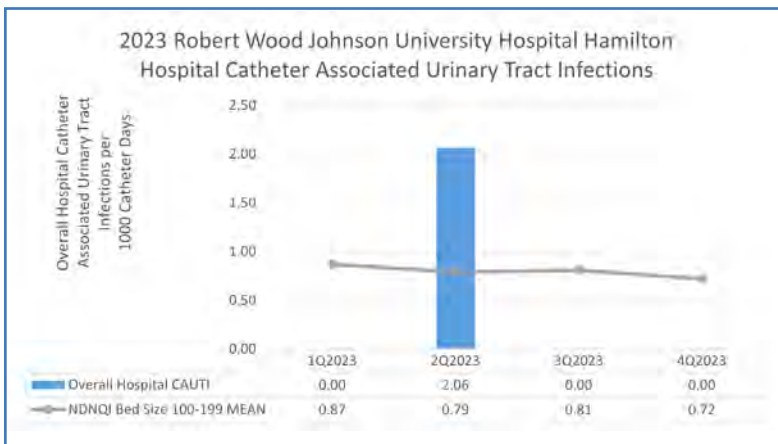
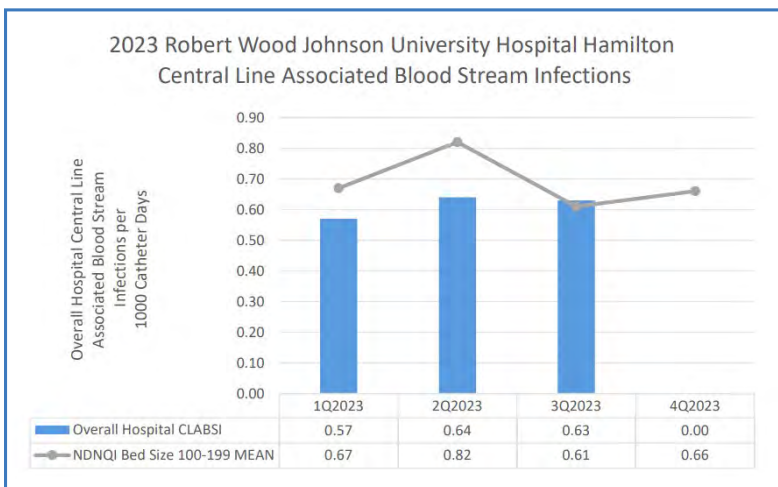
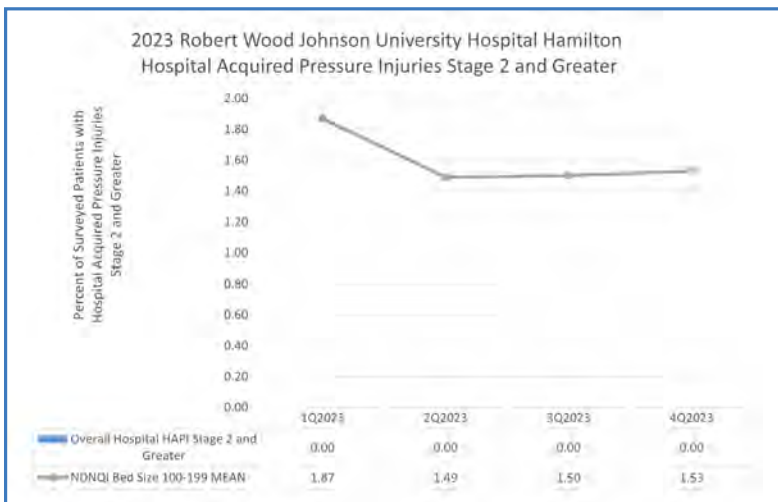
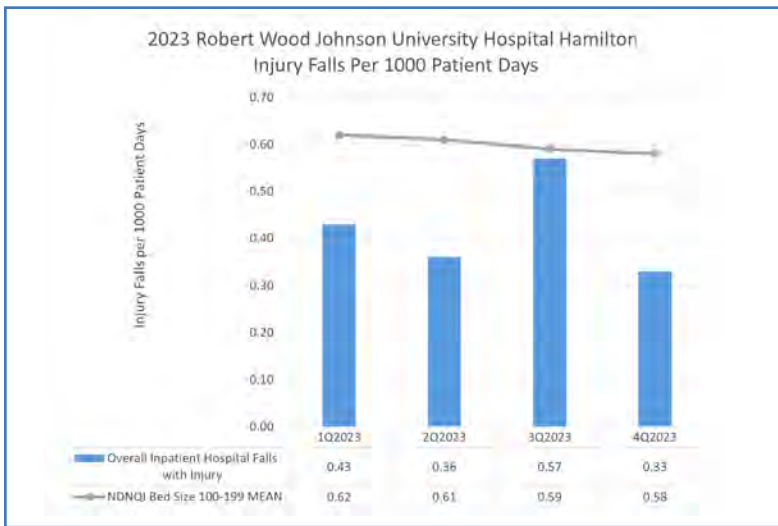
Partnering to Reduce Infections

RWJBH hospitals partnered with Vizient, a quality improvement company, to focus on measures to decrease the hospital-acquired *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff) infection rate and the central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) rate. Through a “Gone in 60 Days” Vizient initiative and related nurse-driven efforts, the C. diff infection rate at RWJUH Hamilton decreased by 36% compared to the prior year.

“As part of this initiative, we conducted audits, examined compliance with best practices, provided education and evaluated new products such as central line dressings,” explains Erin Glospe, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, Director of Infection Prevention. “In addition, C. diff reduction efforts revolved around the development of a new protocol that will empower nurses to facilitate the timelier collection of samples for earlier detection.”

VAP-Free Distinction

Through the efforts of the RWJUH Hamilton ICU/critical care team and respiratory therapists, the hospital achieved a remarkable record of 12 years of zero ventilator-associated pneumonias in 2023.



Nurse-Sensitive Quality Indicators

Nurse-sensitive quality indicator data includes nationally benchmarked data that is compared against similar hospitals, with the goal to achieve results better than the national benchmark. In 2023, RWJUH Hamilton achieved results that were superior to benchmarks in most cases for the following four indicators: falls with injury, hospital-acquired pressure injuries stage 2 or greater, central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI) and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI).

Enhanced Nursing Residency Program

The Nursing Residency Program at RWJUH Hamilton has helped registered nurses with less than six months of acute care experience develop their clinical and leadership skills while acquiring a higher level of training and experience. In 2023, the program was relaunched across RWJBH to ensure consistent content while expanding its offerings. The program now features discipline-specific foundational courses in emergency care, critical care, medical/surgical care and telemetry. It also includes a preceptor course within the first year so nurses can in turn establish a foundation for helping newer colleagues.

“Every RWJBH nurse now has access to the same high-quality program content, including focused topics for professional development,” explains RWJUH Hamilton Clinical Nurse Educator Jennifer Chaiken, BSN, RN, CEN, who serves as one of the educators for the new Nursing Residency Program. “As an added benefit, it helps ensure a seamless transition if a nurse transfers to another RWJBH hospital.”

NWESC Focuses on a Healthier Environment

Established by the Organization of Nurse Leaders of NJ (ONL), the Nursing Workplace Environment and Staffing Council (NWESC) initiative is based on the American Association of Critical Care Nurses’ Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments. This program continues to evolve at RWJUH Hamilton and is co-chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer along with clinical nurse Ryan Brevogel, BSN, RN.

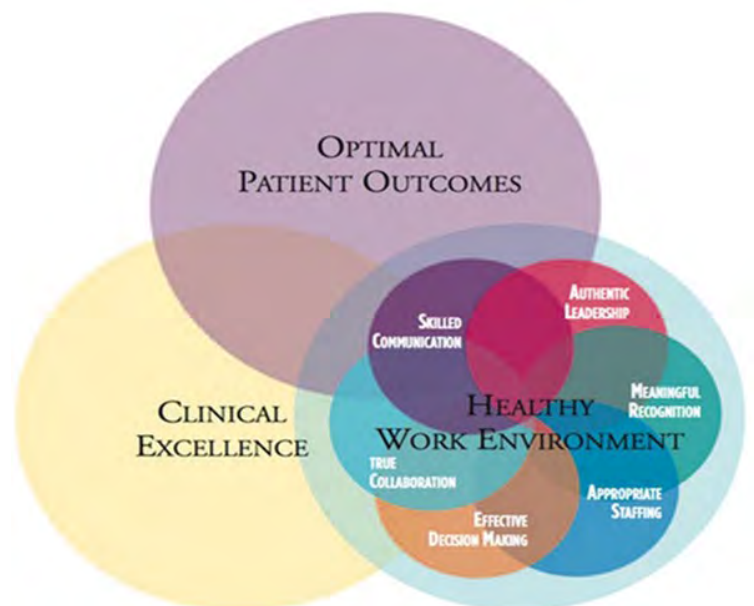
In 2023, the NWESC team proudly developed the initiative “A Walk in My Shoes.” This team-building activity provides the opportunity to expand perspectives on what others experience and how staff can better support each other. Nursing units throughout the hospital connect through job shadowing and have a safe space for gaining insights and building trust across specialties. Through this initiative and others, NWESC creates a forum of participative leadership and amplifies the voices of bedside nurses.

Schwartz Rounds Facilitate Peer Support

To help team members reduce caregiver stress, address emotional challenges and reflect on the human connections in health care, RWJUH Hamilton offers Schwartz Rounds™ through the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare. Facilitated by interdisciplinary team members, these sessions provide an opportunity to express feelings through presentations and dialogue while fostering support. In 2023, the following sessions were held at RWJUH Hamilton, all receiving positive feedback from attendees:

- Sharing the Gift of Life: Experiences in Organ/Tissue Donation
- Caring for our LGBTQ Neighbors: Proudful Respect for Patients and Colleagues
- Stories that Inspire

“During my 38 years as a nurse, I’ve been honored to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others,” says Connie Mocerri, MSN, AGNP-C, Director of Disease Management and the Stroke Program and a speaker for the Stories that Inspire session. “Nursing can be a challenging profession from various standpoints, including physical, emotional and spiritual. But if you can leave each day focused on one positive situation where you made a difference, you’ll always be encouraged to continue this caring journey.”





Highest Recognition for Most Wired

RWJUH Hamilton earned a Performance Excellence Level of 10, the highest level of recognition, in the Acute category of the 2023 Digital Health Most Wired Survey from the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME). CHIME surveys more than 55,000 health care organizations to assess the adoption, integration and impact of technologies. Survey results reflect the dedication and efforts of the entire RWJUH Hamilton team – including nurses throughout the hospital – in maintaining a strong focus on using technology to improve the patient experience.

Nursing Certifications

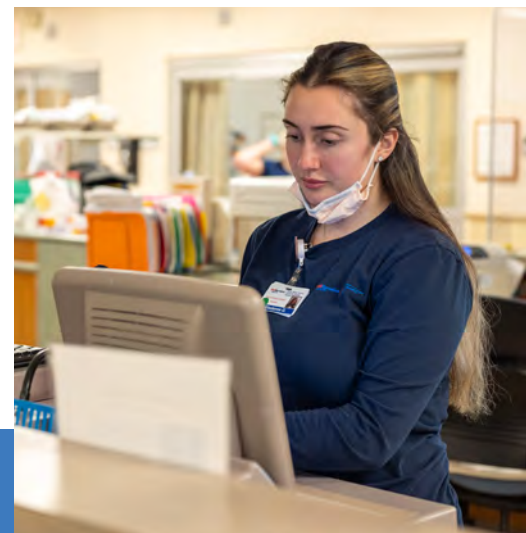
RWJBH is committed to fostering continuing nursing professional development through the promotion and support of nursing certifications. Nursing certification demonstrates a nurse's expertise and commitment to nursing excellence. To assist in this achievement, RWJBH provides ongoing educational opportunities, resources and recognition for nursing certification. At RWJUH Hamilton, nearly 40% of nurses have achieved certifications in their specialties.

Emergency Nursing Certification Award

The Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN), the benchmark for nursing specialty certification across the emergency spectrum, presented RWJBH Emergency Departments (EDs) with the 2023 BCEN National Certification Champion Award. This award highlights the commitment to emergency, trauma and transport nursing clinical excellence and professionalism through national nursing specialty certification, including at RWJUH Hamilton.

To support and encourage emergency nurses to pursue CEN certification, ED educators across RWJBH collaborated to develop a four-week virtual review class. Offered twice in 2023, 118 nurses took the class. Nurses also received discount vouchers for the exam and were reimbursed for the exam cost when attaining certification.

“To maintain board certification, nurses must earn 25 continuing education credits per year, including 20 in emergency-specific areas,” says Jennifer Chaiken, BSN, RN, CEN, RWJUH Hamilton Clinical Nurse Educator and technical coordinator for the CEN review class. “This demonstrates their strong commitment to staying abreast of the latest evidence-based knowledge. Specialty certifications signify the best of the best – and that translates into better patient outcomes and satisfaction.”





Professional Advancement

The Professional Advancement System at RWJUH Hamilton provides clinical nurses with an opportunity to advance their careers through expertise and professional development. Achieving Clinical Nurse Level III and Level IV requires experience, extensive knowledge, clinical insight and strong mentorship abilities. Qualification includes numerous prerequisites, such as participating on a hospital committee and submitting a portfolio that demonstrates how they meet established criteria. Congratulations to the following nurses, who achieved these distinctions.

Clinical Nurse Level III

Dave Baldwin, BSN, RN, ONC, PACU

Eunice Bamgbade, BSN, RN, Lakefront Tower 1

Kristen Crow, RN, Case Management

Lisa Egbert, BSN, RN, Emergency Department

Michelle Fraser, BSN, RN, Lakefront Tower 1

Danely Gonzalez, BSN, RN, Lakefront Tower 2

Jamie Havens, RN, Telemetry North

Tharani Kugapalan, BSN, RN-BC, Same Day Surgery

Kathy Lemmon, BSN, RN, Operating Room

Colleen Petitt, BSN, RN, Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

Elizabeth Restuccia, BSN, RN, Lakefront Tower 1

Caroline Voorhees, BSN, RN, CEN, Emergency Department

Clinical Nurse Level IV

Nancy Baeza, BSN, RN-BC, Lakefront Tower 2

Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC, Orthopedics

Portia Cuffe, BSN, RN-BC, Lakefront Tower 1

Caren Dubell, BSN, RN-BC, Lakefront Tower 1

Kelly Eppolitto, BSN, RN, Lakefront Tower 1

Elizabeth Forcellini, BSN, RN-BC, Lakefront Tower 1

Sandra Haas, BSN, RN, CBN, Bariatrics

Katlyn Laba, RN-BC, Lakefront Tower 1

Ann Mancuso, MSN, RN, CHFRN, Heart Failure Program

Linda Palad, BSN, RN-BC, Telemetry Central

Gwen Pownall, MSN, RN-BC, Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

NEW KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS



New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements

Nurses at RWJUH Hamilton continually seek opportunities for innovation and new knowledge. This includes an expanding focus on research aimed at improving outcomes. Whenever possible, these new findings are shared across the system, regionally and nationally.

Rapid Response Skills Training

In sessions held several times throughout the year, about 100 RWJUH Hamilton nurses participated in a Rapid Response Team (RRT) Skills Review featuring interactive scenarios for stroke, respiratory failure, heart attack and a medical emergency/code blue. Nurses worked in small group settings that included both live actors and mannequins. In addition, nurses had the opportunity to work together creatively to solve a patient crisis in an interactive “Sepsis Escape Room” designed by Telemetry Clinical Nurse Educator Stephanie Caduhada, MSN, RN, CCRN, and ICU Clinical Nurse Educator Naomi Hurley, BSN, RN, CCRN.

“It was an innovative experience that the nurses really enjoyed,” says Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Director of the Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research at RWJUH Hamilton, who participated in the escape room exercise. “Nurses were able to think outside the box to identify the key components of sepsis, with the goal to learn while having fun.”

“Pre- and post-survey results demonstrated that comfort levels for RRT scenarios improved,” adds Caduhada. “Building knowledge through simulation in a calm setting can boost confidence for real emergencies and is especially important for our newer nurses.”

Virtual Technology Expedites ED Care

In 2023, the RWJUH Hamilton Emergency Department (ED) implemented a Virtual Immediate Provider (VIP) telehealth program that quickly and efficiently provides a medical screening exam for adult patients after they’re seen by a triage nurse. Located in an ED exam room and facilitated by an ED technician, the technology enables an RWJBH nurse practitioner or advanced practice provider to talk with patients and conduct a timely virtual assessment to reduce waiting time and expedite care. The VIP program is available Monday through Friday from 12 to 5 p.m.

“While our onsite providers still complete a full medical history and physical during the initial assessment, this program helps initiate care sooner, expedite lab work and imaging orders, reduce the number of patients who leave without being seen and increase patient satisfaction,” says Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN, Director of Emergency Services and Critical Care. “We’ve entered a new age at the forefront of telehealth medicine, and we’re proud to better serve our community while increasing resource efficiency.”





ICU Begins Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy

In sessions held several times throughout the year, about 100 RWJUH Hamilton nurses began offering continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) for patients in the ICU who benefit from this type of dialysis. More than 40 nurses received comprehensive education on this new technology, which is managed with one-on-one care by ICU nurses. This included online educational modules and an eight-hour session that featured hands-on learning provided in collaboration with the CRRT system manufacturer.

“Certain patients who are on vasopressors or are clinically unstable may not be able to tolerate the removal of a large amount of fluid in just a few hours,” explains ICU Clinical Nurse Educator Naomi Hurley, BSN, RN, CCRN. “CRRT is a slower method of dialysis that’s more tolerable for these patients, helping them remain stable throughout the process.”

Hurley provided initial education as well as ongoing troubleshooting classes to help nurses hone their skills. CRRT will also be incorporated into future Critical Care Skills Days at RWJUH Hamilton.

“It’s really empowering for nurses to be able to provide this type of treatment for our patients,” says critical care nurse Feliciano Jimenez, BSN, RN, CCRN. “We’re helping to improve patient outcomes for those who can’t undergo traditional dialysis, and our patients’ families have been very grateful.”

New Cardiac Monitor Training

When new state-of-the-art cardiac monitors were added to many Medical-Surgical rooms at RWJUH Hamilton, all medical-surgical nurses received training on this improved technology. Education included a two-day Basic Arrhythmia Class with a post-class test.

“Our goal was to ensure that 100% of the medical-surgical nurses were skilled in using the new technology,” says Timothy Ryan, MSN, RN, CEN, Nursing Professional Development Practitioner, Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research. “Having consistent monitoring technology is not only more efficient for when nurses float on different floors, but it’s also safer for our patients.”



Nursing Research Highlighted at Quality Fairs

RWJUH Hamilton held a Quality Fair in April, with the following research projects presented by nurses. In addition, these presentations were selected for inclusion at the RWJBH Quality Fair held in May at Pine Manor in Edison.

The Implementation of a Reward and Recognition Program for the Clinical Techs at RWJUH Hamilton Will Decrease their Turnover Rate and Improve their Employee Engagement Scores in the Reward and Recognition Section

Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, and Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

This IRB-approved research study showed that investing in patient care technicians, ED technicians and scrub technicians through the implementation of a clinical ladder, increased wages and enhanced recognition resulted in a significantly decreased turnover rate for both PCTs and ED technicians, and no increase in turnover for scrub technicians. In addition, there was an improvement in employee engagement scores for these disciplines.

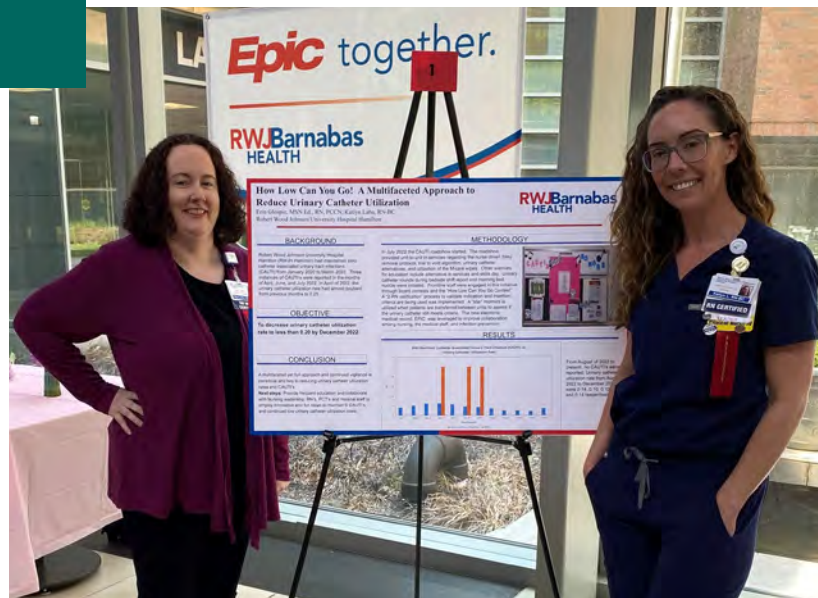
“We now have one-third of our technicians on the clinical ladder, including 19 technicians on Level I and 15 on Level II,” says Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Director of the Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research at RWJUH Hamilton. “We appreciate their contributions to patient care and are proud to help them feel more recognized for their work.”

Implementation of Pod Nursing Care Assignments on a Telemetry Unit to Decrease the Patient Fall Rate

Tara Sweeney, BSN, RN, Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN, and Jacqueline Ciccarelli, MSN, RN, CCRN-K

This research study evaluated the implementation of pod nursing care assignments and staff education aimed at reducing falls on the Telemetry North nursing unit. Following these efforts, a notable improvement was realized within the first month of implementation and improved fall reduction rates were ongoing.

“The clinical coordinators created room assignments based on individual patient needs and unit needs for each shift, with a focus on patient acuity, isolation requirements and fall risk,” says Jacqueline Ciccarelli, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, Manager, Magnet Program and Nursing Performance Improvement. “This allowed at-risk patients to be assigned rooms close to each other while providing nurses with an assigned pod area to oversee these patients. Falls data continues to be monitored on the unit to better gauge the effects of these efforts.”



How Low Can You Go! A Multifaceted Approach to Reduce Urinary Catheter Utilization

Erin Glospie, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, and Katlyn Laba, RN-BC

This performance improvement project was aimed at decreasing the urinary catheter utilization rate to less than 0.20 by the end of 2022. During and after this project, a significant reduction in utilization and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) was achieved and sustained. Methods to achieve these results included education, skills-building, interactive contests, huddle inclusion, rounding and the implementation of nurse-driven protocols.

“Everyone worked together on multifaceted initiatives to ensure that catheters are only used when needed and are removed in a timely manner to prevent potential infections,” says Erin Glospie, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, Director of Infection Prevention.



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