



# 2024 NURSING ANNUAL REPORT

**RWJ**Barnabas  
HEALTH

Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital  
Somerset

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# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



## Empowering Growth at all Levels

Throughout 2024, our Magnet® nursing team demonstrated their ability to be transformational leaders. Working collaboratively with other departments and staff across Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset, they embraced new programs and technology, championed career growth and advanced patient care.

The RWJUH Somerset culture positions nurses for upward mobility in their careers through resources that support growth and development, build confidence and create a strong workforce. This past year, we rolled out the Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support and Health (NOURISH™) Program, a unique model that is integrating newly licensed nurses into nursing practice through preceptor pairing and a dedicated nursing professional development practitioner. A nurse-driven project also paired novice and seasoned nurses to promote advancement on the clinical ladder, with a 100% success rate for participants. In addition, many of our nurses have advanced in their roles with the help of the robust support here, as you'll see within these pages. A common thread on their journeys is how rewarding it's been to pay that support forward by inspiring newer nurses along their own career paths.

Likewise, our nurses have broadened support for patients through specific roles and programs. In 2024, this included a dedicated nurse navigator position that has reduced readmissions for heart failure patients and a new Chemotherapy Callback Program that proactively resolves patient questions before they become issues.

In our quest to continually optimize Epic-based technologies, our nurses have worked collaboratively behind the scenes on several large-scale projects to enhance patient care and improve patient and nurse satisfaction. We validated and launched the Nursing Assignment Wizard, which strategically balances patient assignments for more equitable workloads and greater patient safety and support. In addition, the implementation of a new electronic handoff between the Emergency Department and inpatient floors has resulted in impressive gains in efficiency and satisfaction.

Throughout the hospital, our nurses are actively involved in leveraging their skill sets and competencies. They are taking quality, safety and service to the next level, as evidenced by our Leapfrog "A" Patient Safety Grade, improvements across the board in patient experience ratings and significant improvements in nursing-specific outcomes. As we look ahead to the continued growth that will benefit our community in the coming year, we couldn't be more proud..

Sincerely,

**Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN**

Chief Nursing Officer and  
Vice President of Nursing

**Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC**

Vice President of Behavioral  
Health Services/Clinical Operations

# CELEBRATING 125 YEARS



RWJUH Somerset marked its 125th anniversary on December 6 and will hold celebratory activities throughout 2025. From its humble beginnings in a small building on East Main Street to its current status as a Magnet-designated hospital with world-class facilities, leading-edge technologies and skilled health care professionals, RWJUH Somerset has cared for generations of families from Somerville and throughout Central New Jersey.



## Professional Practice Model

The RWJUH Somerset professional practice model, “Our Caring Tree,” represents the Ten Carative Factors of the nursing professional practice model defined by Jean Watson, RN, PhD. This approach sees nursing as a human science that focuses on the process of caring for individuals, families and groups. Through caring transactions, nurses assist people in gaining a higher degree of harmony within the mind, body and soul.

The tree image represents how nurses are rooted in excellence and continually seek to transform, empower and inspire. It reflects nurse, patient and family relationships, the foundations of professional practice, the standards of care that ensure a nurturing

environment and the shared governance structure that supports patient care delivery.

- Based upon sound judgment, competence, evidence-based research and ethics, adaptation is key in our ever-changing health care environment.
- Methods of quality improvement, research and innovation refine our practice.
- Nurses serve as leaders, aspiring for the highest level of judgment, ethics and standards. Leadership is recognized through accountability and accepting the responsibilities, privileges and rights within our professional practice.

## Mission, Vision and Values

The nursing team at RWJUH Somerset embraces the new RWJBarnabas Health mission, vision and values 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

At RWJUH Somerset, nurses at all levels and in all roles serve as transformational leaders who share in decision-making to achieve the organization's mission and to inspire nursing practice across the care continuum. Exemplary safety, service and quality outcomes are achieved through open communication, execution of a well-defined nursing strategic plan, application of a well-articulated nursing philosophy and a vision that supports nursing excellence in an ever-changing health care environment.

## Supporting Nurses' Upward Mobility

The RWJUH Somerset team promotes growth and professional development among nurses at all levels and across all phases of their careers. Support ranges from nurse residency programs, tuition reimbursement and clinical ladder opportunities to peer-to-peer engagement, mentorship and leadership coaching. Below, some of the RWJUH Somerset nurses who advanced in their careers in 2024 provide their perspectives on this support.



I started as a mother/baby tech at RWJUH Somerset, but I always knew I wanted to be a nurse. Maternity/Labor and Delivery is like my home. The nurses here took me under their wings and taught me a lot along the way to help me feel confident and secure in my practice. I recently became resuscitation certified, and within a week I encountered a situation where I was able to bring back a baby's heartbeat. The support here has been phenomenal.

- Giavanna Romero, RN, now a Labor and Delivery nurse resident



I earned my BSN with tuition assistance from RWJUH Somerset, had several mentors to guide me as a clinical nurse on the inpatient behavioral health unit and attended leadership and preceptor development classes. A nurse educator opportunity arose through someone I mentored, so it was like coming full circle. Nursing is a team effort. Supporting and uplifting each other creates a stronger workforce, helps us grow and develop in the field and ultimately benefits the patients we care for.

- Alisia Tonuzi, BSN, RN, now a behavioral health educator



Starting in the new graduate program in the ICU during COVID, I learned very quickly from the seasoned nurses, leaders and educators how to hit the ground running. Through the encouragement of nurse mentors,, I became a charge nurse and, more recently, assistant director. There's so much that makes this job so fulfilling. I received tremendous guidance and, in turn, I love to help nurses be strong and grow in their roles. It's amazing to see a miraculous recovery and know it's through the efforts of your staff.

- Kerry Eskay, BSN, RN, now assistant director, Critical Care: ICU, CCU & IMCU



There's support here for every path, and I'm thankful that the team recognizes potential and is a driving force in encouraging you to take advantage of new opportunities. Since starting my career here as a critical care CCT and advancing to nursing director, I continue to learn more every day. We're here to help each other. This supportive environment and the leadership training I received made me want to be a leader.

- Laura Arango, MSN, RN, CCRN, now nursing director, Pavilion 3 Medical Unit



Throughout my journey here, I was nurtured and encouraged to take every next step. Advancement is truly embodied here, from nurses and leaders who see something special in you to leadership coaching that helps you reach your highest potential. It's a culture where everyone wants you to succeed. The most fulfilling part of my career has been to pay it forward in coaching another nurse to be part of my leadership team.

- Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP, now nursing director, 4-West Neuroscience Pavilion



## Electronic Handoff Reduces ED to Inpatient Transition Time

When patients in the Emergency Department (ED) are admitted to an inpatient unit, the transition has traditionally required verbal communication between busy ED and floor nurses and the coordination of appropriate timing among the Bed Management, Transport and Environmental Services teams. Thanks to the implementation of new Epic-based e-handoff technology involving the collaboration of nurses, admitting physicians and staff at all levels, patient hold times from decision to admission have decreased by nearly half.

“In planning this transition, we met regularly with nursing leadership to address any potential implementation barriers and identify exclusion criteria,” explains Monika Ramirez, MSN, RN, PCCN, administrative director of Clinical Operations at RWJUH Somerset. “We then helped team members understand the value of the transition and provided comprehensive education on the process, which was instrumental to a smooth rollout.”

The technology triggers a 20-minute window from the admission decision to a Transport alert, giving inpatient nurses the opportunity to review electronic patient transfer information and ask questions if needed. Patient safety is also ensured through built-in exclusion criteria, such as requiring a verbal report for patients who have had a stroke. In addition, electronic patient data facilitates timely decision-making for the inpatient team on next steps in care.

“Working together, we’ve made tremendous improvements in efficiency and have attained among the best throughput metrics across RWJBH and similar hospitals in the region,” says Mary Wieczorek, MSN, RN, NE-BC, administrative director of the ED. “It’s a much smoother, faster transition, which has helped to reduce stress, manage expectations and increase satisfaction among patients, families and the entire team.”



## Structural Empowerment

Solid structures and processes have been developed at RWJUH Somerset to support nurses' professional development, promote participation in community and population health outreach activities and recognize nurses for their contributions in achieving strategic priorities. Interprofessional collaboration and participation in shared governance councils are encouraged to promote an innovative and research-intensive professional practice environment in which nurses, patients, families, colleagues and the community at large flourish.



## DNP Project Helps Nurses Ascend the Clinical Ladder

When 2-East Cardiac Pavilion Nursing Director Kashawna Still, DNP, RN, PCCN, (pictured above on left) was considering quality improvement project topics as part of her Rutgers University DNP degree requirement, she identified an opportunity to foster nurse engagement on the clinical ladder at RWJUH Somerset. Using the clinical ladder framework created by Patricia Benner, she sought to bridge knowledge gaps between novice and expert nurses by developing an initiative entitled, “Implementing a Peer-to-Peer Partnering Program to Increase Participation on the Clinical Ladder.”

Still secured IRB approval for the project and identified nurses from the 2-East and 2-West Cardiac Pavilions who were eligible to submit clinical ladder level I and II applications on September 1, along with any nurses who were on clinical ladder levels III and IV. After promoting the project across unit safety huddles and meeting with those interested, she paired novice nurses with expert nurse mentors to create a peer-to-peer support system.

Throughout the eight-week initiative, mentor nurses provided guidance and support to help novice nurses complete the requirements and application for the clinical ladder program, with biweekly check-in meetings to monitor progress. All 23 nurses who participated in the project completed the application and successfully advanced on the clinical ladder. Ten of the 23 nurses were first-time participants in the clinical ladder program, and two-thirds of Cardiac Pavilion nurses are now engaged in the clinical ladder.

“Post-intervention survey feedback showed that having a nurse mentor decreased perceived stress associated with the clinical ladder process, making it much more attainable,” explains Still, who was supported by Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Nursing Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN, as her site mentor. “Clinical ladder engagement broadens hospital committee participation, enhances professional development and promotes evidence-based practice, ultimately helping to improve patient outcomes.”



## Stroke Education Targets Firefighters

While conducting a literature review, 4-West Neuroscience Pavilion Nursing Director Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP, (pictured left) learned that firefighters are at increased risk for stroke due to environmental factors such as smoke exposure, which can increase stress hormone levels and blood pressure. As part of the unit's community outreach efforts, Lettieri – whose twin brother is a firefighter – teamed up with Stroke Center Program Manager Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN, (pictured center) and Neuroscience Nurse Manager Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, (pictured right) to launch a population health initiative by providing targeted stroke education at North Brunswick Volunteer Fire Company #2.

“The firefighters were interested and engaged in asking questions and learning more about stroke risk factors, warning signs and safety measures,” says Kohlhepp. “We’re working to expand our outreach among this high-risk population in the coming year.”

## Nurses Attend Magnet Conference

Three RWJUH Somerset nurses attended the 2024 ANCC National Magnet® and Pathway to Excellence Conference® last fall in New Orleans: Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN, Special Procedures/Radiology nurse, Magnet Enculturation Council Chair, Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC, vice president of Behavioral Health Services/Clinical Operations and Eileen Allen, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, Magnet program director.

Attending the conference enables nurses to learn about best practices from other Magnet organizations, which in turn can be adapted and applied in their own organizations to improve patient outcomes and nurse satisfaction. The RWJUH Somerset attendees also had the opportunity to share in the celebration of Magnet redesignation for Monmouth Medical Center and Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center.

“It was very exciting to be a first-time attendee and network with nurses from around the world,” says Miranda. “Learning about new trends and what other Magnet hospitals are doing was impressive and empowering.”



## CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

The Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR) provides staff with opportunities to practice, learn and grow professionally in an increasingly complex and challenging health care environment. The team is committed to providing structural empowerment for family-centered care, shared decision-making, autonomy and clinical excellence. By incorporating high reliability organization (HRO) principles, CPDIR helps ensure that outcomes and safety are always a priority.

### Shared Governance Councils

Shared governance provides an organizational framework that empowers clinical nurses to participate in and lead decision-making processes. Through unit-based departmental councils, the shared governance model provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information that enhances the quality of nursing care and promotes clinical excellence through accountability and collaboration.



**Hong Zhang, BSN, RN, SCRN, Chair**

Education Council

Education Council representatives disseminate current and ongoing educational activities and updates to their nursing units while serving as a resource to identify and address unit-specific educational needs.

Patient/Family Education Council

This council provides a forum for a systematic, multidisciplinary approach to facilitate the assessment, design, planning, implementation and evaluation of patient and family educational resources, materials and programs. The council strives to ensure appropriate literacy levels in educational materials for patients and families.



**Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN, Chair**

Magnet Enculturation Council

Members of the Magnet Enculturation Council support the Magnet framework of facilitating professional growth and continuous lifelong learning by increasing the academic progression of education in nursing, promoting continuing competencies, developing leaders and facilitating educational opportunities that advance the profession through evidence-based practice.



**Heather Davis, BSN, RN, OCN, Chair**

Nursing Performance Improvement (PI) Council

As part of shared governance efforts, the Nursing Performance Improvement (PI) Council meets monthly to recommend appropriate actions for quality assurance and performance improvement activities across the organization.



**Sean Mullen, ASN, RN, OCN, CNRN, SCRN, Chair**

Professional Practice Council

Members of the Professional Practice Council ensure that nursing practice standards are ethical, current, evidence-based, theoretically sound and aligned with RWJUH Somerset's strategic goals.

## NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

In May 2024, RWJUH Somerset held a celebration to honor Nurse Excellence Award recipients and present scholarships.



2024 Magnet Nurse of the Year Award

**Patty Kasher, BSN, RN, RN-BC – Same Day Center**

Kasher began her career as a graduate nurse on 1-East and has been a valuable member of the nursing team for more than 35 years. In the words of her nominator, Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN, “Patty has demonstrated time and time again her passion for her profession, care for patients and camaraderie with her peers. I am proud to call Patty not just a co-worker but a true friend who epitomizes the definition of Magnet Nurse of the Year!”

Transformational Leadership Award

**Kaitlyn Gray, MSN, RN, RN-BC – Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR)**

Structural Empowerment Award

**Wound Resource Committee**

Exemplary Professional Practice Award

**Patricia Sonsiadek, MSN, RN, ACM, CCD – Care Management**

New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements Award

**Conchita Macaro, BSN, RN, RN-BC – PACU**

Community Outreach Award

**Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN – Special Procedures/Radiology**

Advanced Practice Provider Award

**Christopher Johnstone, MSN, RN, APN, ACNP-BC – Allied Health Professionals & House Coverage**

Nursing Technician/Technologist Award

**Nicholas Falgiano – ED Crisis Center/Behavioral Health**

Friend of Nursing Award

**Ryan Norman, MI, AHIP – Medical Library**



### Professional Development and Magnet Enculturation Scholarship Awards

**Kathleen Marsh, BSN, RN, SCRN – 4-West Neuroscience Pavilion, BSN Scholarship Recipient**

**Karen Feng, BSN, RN – Rapid Response Team, DNP Scholarship Recipient**

### The Lynn Kearney Memorial Scholarship Recipients

This scholarship, established in memory of RWJUH Somerset's former chief nursing officer, carries on Lynn Kearney's legacy by supporting a new generation of nurses who are pursuing nursing programs. The scholarship is funded by generous donations to the Somerset Health Care Foundation.

- Ana Silva Chinchilla
- Karyn Lacanna, BSN, RN
- Tenagne Lakew, BSN, RN
- Evelyn McNelis
- Meagan Pinho, ASN, RN
- Kristel Rambaud
- Mary Rowland, BSN, RN, CCRN
- Cesar Torres
- Victoria Whitman, ASN, RN
- Charleen Zelaya



# The DAISY Award

## FOR EXTRAORDINARY NURSES

IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES

### Extraordinary Nurses Recognized with DAISY Awards

Established by the DAISY Foundation™ and coordinated at RWJUH Somerset by the Magnet Enculturation Council, the DAISY Award® recognizes the extraordinary, compassionate care that nurses provide for patients and families.



#### Sandra Buen, BSN, RN – Oncology Pavilion

In nominating Sandra, a patient wrote, “There is always one [nurse] who excels and goes beyond the basic duty of nursing care. [Sandy] makes me feel that I am more than just a patient, I am a person. She uses common sense behind her medical knowledge to rely on...She goes over every single medication and teaches me about its use and side effects. She checks my blood pressure and heart rate before she gives me medication and based on the numbers, determines if I need it...She is a Magnet nurse and made me feel extra special and safe.”



#### Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN – Special Procedures/Radiology

A patient nominated Peachie, writing, “Peachie is an amazing nurse, dedicated, experienced and compassionate...I have come to depend on Peachie as my rock, knowing that if she is in the room, everything will be ok. She ensures my comfort, safety and medical needs from the moment I arrive to when I am discharged. If I am in any distress, Peachie will even call me personally the next day to ensure I am doing well. She is a true asset to RWJUH Somerset and deserves the DAISY Award as a seasoned and extraordinary nurse. She is one of a kind.”



#### Fabienne Oukessou, ASN, RN – Oncology Pavilion

In the words of a patient’s family member, “Fabienne was one of the most caring, empathetic nurses I have ever encountered, and that says a lot because I work in a nursing school. Fabienne took the time to listen to my dad as he recounted his time during WW2 and shared stories...Fabienne also took time explaining his condition and his plan of care. It is my pleasure to nominate Fabienne...The entire staff should receive recognition, but I do feel Fabienne is a very special nurse, and this comes from someone who has an extremely high regard for nurses.”

### Employees of the Month



**Robertson Fleurmond,**  
BSN, RN  
Critical Care: ICU, CCU & IMCU



**Ashley Hernandez,**  
ASN, RN  
2-East Cardiac Pavilion



**Victoria Lamzon,**  
BSN, RN  
2-East Cardiac Pavilion



**Victor Okani,**  
ASN, RN  
Oncology Pavilion



**Taylor Pugliese,**  
BSN, RN  
2-West Cardiac Pavilion



**Annie Walters,**  
MSN, RN  
Oncology Pavilion

### Additional Awards

Sepsis Committee Recognition

**Wilma Aquino, MSN, RN, C-PAN,**  
Performance Improvement

Local LGBTQ Hero Award

Presented by the Downtown Somerville Alliance

**Jamila Carter, MSN, RN, Babs Siperstein PROUD Center**



## Nurses Embrace Community Outreach

RWJUH Somerset respects and celebrates the unique backgrounds of its nurses and all employees. The hospital has earned national recognition for its diversity and inclusion efforts, and it encourages and supports related outreach initiatives. Through various community outreach initiatives, nurses and other health care providers partner to promote healthy behaviors, improve access to primary and preventive care and reduce health disparities.

### Community Education and Donations

In 2024, the nursing team at RWJUH Somerset led presentations and supported 74 community events and 28 health screenings, including outreach to underserved populations at churches, health fairs and other venues. Nurses also helped coordinate multiple donation drives for items ranging from backpacks, school supplies and personal hygiene items to gift cards during the holidays.

### Nurses Complete International Missions

With supplies contributed from RWJUH Somerset, nurses completed the following international mission trips in 2024 to support those in need:

#### Nursing Support in Ghana

Janet Brooks, BSN, RN, assistant director of the Oncology Pavilion, traveled to Ghana a second time to volunteer for the Ghana Association of Medical Aid (GAMA) Medical Mission 2024 sponsored by the Uriel Impact Generation. Janet volunteered as a triage nurse at three locations in Ghana, performing nursing assessments, triaging patients, taking vital signs and testing blood glucose. Janet helped nearly 3,000 community residents during her week-long mission trip. Recognizing and assisting with an unmet need through personal funding and help from friends, she also donated more than 250 cases of sanitary pads, soap and deodorant for young girls in the villages and provided education on sanitary pad use.



### Cardiac Screenings Safeguard Young Athletes

To help detect underlying heart disorders that can trigger cardiac arrest, RWJUH Somerset offered free cardiac athletic screenings for 61 student athletes ages 14 to 18. The screenings were conducted in the hospital's Cardiac Diagnostic Testing Department by cardiologists, family practice residents, nurses and technicians, and one teen was referred to a pediatric cardiologist for additional testing. Over the past 15 years, the hospital has conducted these screenings for nearly 1,200 young athletes.



### Education and Screenings at Indian Health Camp

RWJUH Somerset was a supporting organization for the Health Camp of New Jersey in collaboration with Sri Venkateswara Temple - Balaji Mandir in Bridgewater for a Health Screening and Disease Prevention Fair. Eleven RWJUH Somerset nurses, along with physicians and other team members, participated in the event, which included outreach to individuals who were uninsured and underinsured. Nurses screened 119 people, identifying 73 with elevated blood pressure, 27 with high glucose levels and five with high cholesterol. Nearly 70 people were referred for follow-up care.



#### Philippines Medical Assistance

Special Procedures nurse Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN, joined members of the Philippine Nurses Association of New Jersey and Metropolitan Washington D.C. for a medical mission trip to the Philippines. Her outreach

provided medical, dental and vision assistance to residents in need on Camiguin Island.

#### Meals for Students in Kenya

Somerset Family Practice Nurse Practitioner/Manager Melissa Rivers-Richardson, DNP, RN, APN, FNP-BC, climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to raise funds to provide meals for children of the Biafra school, located in Nairobi, Kenya. After an eight-day climb, Melissa and her family visited the school and served lunch to 250 students.



### Community Baby Shower Supports Healthy Pregnancies

Nearly 60 individuals preparing for pregnancy attended a Sprinkles of Health and Happiness Community Baby Shower held at RWJUH Somerset. Staffed by 12 nurses and other team members, event featured gifts, raffles, glucose and blood pressure screenings and education on topics ranging from prenatal care and nutrition to breastfeeding and infant safety.



## RWJUH Somerset nurses were also involved in the following outreach activities in 2024:

4-West Neuroscience Pavilion Nurses and CCTs

Feminine Products Donation Drive for Bound Brook Schools

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Jocelyn Accetta, BSN, RN

Edna Estrada, BSN, RN, CCRN

Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, A-GNP-C, CDCES

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Conchita Macaro, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC

Glucose and Blood Pressure Screenings, Bridgewater Township Senior Wellness and Resource Fair, Bridgewater Senior Center

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Kenya Allen-Pitt, BSN, RN, RNC-LRNN

Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Carol DiCosmo, MSN, RN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, C-ONQS

Jennifer Grosseto, BSN, RN, IBCLC

Natalie Manfre, BSN, RN, RNC-OB

Jenna Martinez, BSN, RN

Mary Mickelsen, BSN, RN

Melissa Morano, BSN, RN, RNC-OB

Arum Samy, BSN, RN

Gina Shoemaker, BSN, RN, CLC

Bernadette Tomale, BSN, RN, RNC-LRNN

Jazmine White-Johnson, BSN, RN, RNC-NIC

Education and Screenings, Sprinkles of Health and Happiness Community Baby Shower, RWJUH Somerset

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Linnet Angir, BSN, RN, CCRN, HCM

Lordina Borja, BSN, RN

Shirley Cuaresma, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Patty Kasher, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Ann Elisse Poiani, BSN, RN

Ashley Seyler, BSN, RN

Cathy Smith, BSN, RN

Mary Beth Strange, RN

Christine Woolf, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Maria Yavornitzki, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Same Day Center Back to School Supplies and Adopt-a-Family Thanksgiving Drives

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Wilma Aquino, MSN, RN, C-PAN

Kimberly Bates, MSN, RN, CCRN-CMC

World Sepsis Day Education, RWJUH Somerset

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Wilma Aquino, MSN, RN, C-PAN

Katie Faggiano, BSN, RN

Debra Ferber, MHA, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Loren Herka, MSN, RN

Maricar Panganiban, MSN, RN, CCRN

World Patient Safety Day Education, RWJUH Somerset

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Laura Arango, MSN, RN, CCRN

Donate Life Flag Raising

Education, The Gift of Life: Organ Donation Resource Table, RWJUH Somerset

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Go Red Fashion Show Participant, Bridgewater Commons Mall

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Tina Arzadon, BSN, RN, CNOR

Nazare Costa, BSN, RN, CNOR

Woan-Hsiang Yeh, BSN, RN, CNOR, RNFA

Operating Room Robot Tour for Somerville High School Students, RWJUH Somerset

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Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN

Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Nazare Costa, BSN, RN, CNOR

Maria Theresa Domider, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Jennifer Green, BSN, RN

Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN

Samantha Pendleton, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Denisse Puente-Orbe, MSN, RN, CNL

Woan-Hsiang Yen, BSN, RN, CNOR, RNFA

Education and Screenings, Indian Health Camp of NJ, Bridgewater

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Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN

Mary Mickelsen, BSN, RN

Harvinder Singh, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Blood Pressure Screenings, Community Health Fair, Shimon and Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center, Bridgewater

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Rosielynn Borja, BSN, RN

Grace Colipano, BSN, RN

Shirley Cuaresma, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, A-GNP-C, CDCES

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Tenagne Lakew, BSN, RN

Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC

Glucose and Blood Pressure Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

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Janet Brooks, BSN, RN

Mission Trip to Ghana, Ghana Association for Medical Aid

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Daisy Cardoso, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC

Education, Copa De La Diversion (Chile and Panama), TD Bank Ballpark, Bridgewater

Prostate Screening, Steeplechase Cancer Center

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Daisy Cardoso, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC

Nancy Fischer, BSN, RN

Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN

Deslin Jackson, BSN, RN

Eileen Kerrigan, BSN, RN

Niki Patel, BSN, RN

Maria Theresa Reyes, BSN, RN

Arlene Rodriguez, BSN, RN

Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC

Gemma Tigol, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC

Pre-Admission Testing Back to School Supplies and Adopt-a-Family Thanksgiving Drives

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Jamila Carter, MSN, RN

Medication Prior Authorization Outreach, PRIDE Center, Highland Park

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Haley Cassady, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC

Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC

Tracey Ward, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Education and Blood Pressure Screenings, Franklin Day, Somerset

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Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Blood Pressure Screenings, 3M, Flemington

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Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Blood Pressure Screenings, Go Red Fashion Show, Bridgewater Commons Mall

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Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Marlaina Mykytok, BSN, RN

Scarlett Suan, BSN, RN

Blood Pressure Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

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Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Samantha Pendleton, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Blood Pressure Screenings, Montgomery Township Employee Health Fair

Kimberly Cromwell-Piniella, BSN, RN, CBCN, OCN

Education, It's a Pink Party! Make Time for Mammograms, Steeplechase Cancer Center

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Kimberly Cromwell-Piniella, BSN, RN, CBCN, OCN

Rosalynne Javier, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, A-GNP-C, CDCES

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Health Screenings and Education, Somerset County Business Partnership Biz Fest Expo, TD Bank Ballpark, Bridgewater

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Joy Dimagmaliw, BSN, RN, CV-BC

Kathleen Edge, MSN, RN, CCRN, PCCN

Kristina Giangrande, BSN, RN, CCRN

Karen Huerta, BSN, RN, CV-BC

Thao Nguyen, BSN, RN, CV-BC

Eshley Pinto, BSN, RN, CV-BC

Sara Straub, BSN, RN, PCCN

Cardiac Athletic Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

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Maria Theresa Domider, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Leadership & Advisory Team, Philippine Nurses Association

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Jill Ferrante, MSN, RN

Volunteer, Somerset County Food Bank, Bridgewater

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Nancy Fischer, BSN, RN

Blood Pressure Screenings, Mental Health Fair, St. Matthias Church, Somerset

Community Health Flu Vaccine Clinic, Redshaw School, New Brunswick

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Jennifer Grosseto, BSN, RN, IBCLC

Birthing Basics Education, RWJUH Somerset

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Rosemarie Gungon, BSN, RN

Felicia McClain, BSN, RN

Facilitator, Monthly Eating Disorder Support Group, RWJUH Somerset

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Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN

Volunteer Outreach, Immaculate Conception Church, Somerville: Christmas Giving Tree, Baby Bottle Boomerang, Caring Casseroles

Knitting/Crocheting Volunteer, Knit the Rainbow; #HATNOTHATE

Karen Jahn, BSN, RN, RN-BCCVN

Natalie Manfre, BSN, RN, RNC-OB

Blood Pressure Screenings, Affinity Credit Union, Edison

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Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, A-GNP-C, CDCES

Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC

Tenagne Lakew, BSN, RN

Dawit Meron, BSN, RN

Education and Screenings, Canal Walk Health Fair, Somerset

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Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, A-GNP-C, CDCES

Ana Plaras, BSN, RN, RN-BC

Glucose and Blood Pressure Screenings, Bridgewater Senior Center

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Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC

Joint Center Education, RWJUH Somerset Services Showcase

Presenter, "Shoulder Your Joint Pain: What You Knee to Know," Somerville Elks, Bridgewater

Presenter, "A Bone of Contention; Osteoporosis, Osteopenia and Osteoarthritis," RWJUH Somerset

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Melissa Keenan, MSN, RN

Education, Somerset Patriots Breast Cancer Awareness Day and Steeplechase Cancer Center Outreach, TD Bank Ball Park, Bridgewater

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Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Blood Pressure Screenings, Sterling Pointe Adult Community in Somerset Health Fair; Food Bank of Somerset County, Bridgewater; Zarephath Pantry, Somerset

Cholesterol Screenings, RWJUH Somerset Flu Vaccines, RWJUH Somerset

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Sarah Kish, BSN, RN

Marion Mueller, BSN, RN

Annual Children's Holiday Celebration Support, Steeplechase Cancer Center

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Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP

Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN

Stroke Education, North Brunswick Fire Department

Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN

Stroke Screenings, Steeplechase Cancer Center

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Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN

Mission Trip to Camiguin Island, Philippines

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Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Education, Somerset County Juneteenth, Somerset

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Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Melissa Rivers-Richardson, DNP, RN, APN, FNP-BC

Education, Men's Health Program, First Baptist Church Lincoln Gardens, Somerset

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Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Yesenia Zwiren, BSN, RN

Presenter, Health Hike, A "Walk and Talk" on Fall Prevention, Bridgewater Commons

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Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS

Education, World Hand Hygiene Day, RWJUH Somerset

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Theresa Powell, BSN, RN

Education, Breast Cancer Awareness Night at the Somerset Patriots, Bridgewater

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Maria Theresa Reyes, BSN, RN

Volunteer, St. Joseph's Church/High School Bingo, Metuchen

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Melissa Rivers-Richardson, DNP, RN, APN, FNP-BC

Mission Trip to Nairobi, Kenya

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Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC

Glucose and Blood Pressure Screenings, TD Bank Ball Park, Bridgewater

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Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN

Stroke Awareness and Prevention Education, Franklin Township Public Library

Presenter, "From Nature to Nurture, Healing from Stroke," Somerville Elks, Bridgewater

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Scarlett Suan, BSN, RN

Education, Renaissance at Raritan Valley Community College Health Fair, Branchburg

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Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN

Education, El Poder, North Plainfield School



## EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The true essence of a Magnet organization stems from the nurses' exemplary professional practice. RWJUH Somerset nurses are competent, accountable, autonomous practitioners who uphold ethical, safety and regulatory standards while striving for excellence through the application of evidence-based practice. Our nurses embrace the principles of exemplary professional practice as evidenced by our professional practice model and overarching care delivery model that places the patient and family in the center of all that we do.

## Targeted Orientation Program “Nourishes” Nurses

Developed under RWJBH’s Institute for Nursing Excellence and Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR), the Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support and Health (NOURISH™) program is a unique model for promoting competency and confidence among newly licensed nurses on dedicated units. RWJUH Somerset launched its NOURISH program in 2024 to meet the specific needs of new nurses on the medical/surgical and telemetry units (1-East, 2-East Cardiac Pavilion and Orthopedic Pavilion). Serving as an extension of the hospital’s Nurse Residency Program, the NOURISH program helps bridge the gap between nursing school and clinical care.

Throughout the six-week program, each new nurse is paired with an experienced nurse preceptor on their assigned unit. RWJUH Somerset was the first RWJBH hospital to expand that support by hiring a dedicated nursing professional development practitioner for the NOURISH program. In this role, Ginger Newmark, MSN, RN, CCRN, ONC, serves as a program facilitator, educator and mentor for participating nurse residents. This includes rounding, planning schedules, providing focused instruction, reinforcing learning and serving as a consistent presence for any questions or follow-up needs.

“I still remember how daunting it was to transition to nursing care as a new graduate, and it’s really satisfying to serve in a role that instills confidence and promotes growth,” says Newmark, who works 12-hour shifts to align with nursing schedules. “An added bonus is the opportunity to build ongoing relationships with preceptors and participants.”

RWJUH Somerset started its third NOURISH cohort in December 2024, with a total of 33 new nurses participating since the program began in June.

“Having Ginger available to serve as an extension of unit-based education also creates more flexibility for our nursing preceptors to focus on a broader array of needs,” says Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, director of CPDIR at RWJUH Somerset. “As we collect data, we anticipate a positive impact on care quality and nursing retention.”



## Nurse Navigator Role Reduces Heart Failure Readmissions

Research shows that nearly 25% of patients with heart failure in the U.S. are readmitted within 30 days of hospital discharge. In examining ways to better equip RWJUH Somerset patients with tools to reduce readmission, Kathleen Edge, MSN, RN, CCRN, PCCN, administrative director of Cardiovascular Services, Endoscopy and Special Procedures, gained leadership approval for a new position providing personalized support for patients with heart failure.

Elana Barkley, MSN, RN, CCRN, joined the RWJUH Somerset team in this heart failure clinical nurse navigator role in October. Barkley conducts daily chart audits and visits every patient with active heart failure, providing education on symptom recognition and management, medication instructions, nutrition advice and additional at-home recommendations. In collaboration with cardiologists and Olivia Wierciszewski, PharmD, a new transition of care pharmacist, Barkley assists patients in navigating medication coverage and compliance considerations to help ensure convenient, affordable patient access. She also schedules follow-up cardiologist appointments and conducts regular post-discharge phone assessments. Since her arrival, early data have already shown a reduction in heart failure readmissions at RWJUH Somerset.

“Heart failure is an incredibly challenging diagnosis for many patients, but understanding how to effectively manage the condition can make a significant difference in quality of life,” says Barkley, who has a decade of critical care nurse educator experience. “Our patients have been truly appreciative of our education efforts. Knowing they’re able to spend less time in the hospital and more time enjoying life is very rewarding.”

## Infusion Nurses Implement Patient Callback Program

To provide more robust support for patients receiving chemotherapy at RWJUH Somerset’s Steeplechase Cancer Center, infusion nurses developed and implemented a structured Chemotherapy Callback Program in which they call patients within 72 hours of their first treatment session to check in, assess symptoms and answer questions. The calls also provide an opportunity to review medications and reinforce education. Whenever possible, patients are called by the nurses who managed their treatment to support the care continuum.

“We’ve already noticed a difference in the ability to catch symptoms early, which helps prevent any potential adverse events,” explains Melissa Keenan, MSN, RN, manager of the Infusion Center. “If any issues are identified, our nurses are able to help resolve them by connecting patients with the appropriate care prior to their next appointment.”

“Even if a patient feels fine, these calls can identify other potential needs that we can preemptively address by looping in a social worker or nurse navigator,” says infusion nurse Olivia Warzybuk, ASN, RN, who proposed the idea for the program. “Patients feel more comfortable with their care and are able to build stronger bonds with our nurses, which helps with treatment as a whole.”



## Nurse-Driven Protocol Boosts Infection Prevention

In a hospital-acquired *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff) protocol implemented in 2024, nurses were empowered to place C. diff orders when indicated to proactively identify this infection earlier, leading to earlier treatment and improved patient outcomes. RWJUH Somerset's infection prevention and Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR) teams collaborated to provide education prior to the Epic-based protocol going live.

"This education really opened the lines of communication and prompted dialogue, leading to engaged collaboration in launching the protocol," says Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS, director of Infection Prevention. "We ended the year with a C. diff infection rate of just 0.315, which is 34% below the CMS threshold."

Nurses were also integral to ensuring infection prevention measures and reinforcement of best practices on other fronts in 2024. In particular:



- RWJUH Somerset achieved an exemplary hospital-wide hand hygiene compliance rate of 97.6%. Nurses achieved a compliance rate of 98.3%, an improvement over already strong scores from the prior year.
- Surgical site infection rates for hip and knee replacement procedures remained very low at 0.17, demonstrating a remarkable level of attention to detail by the perioperative and surgical teams.
- The central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) rate dropped from an already low 0.64 in 2023 to 0.55 in 2024, marking a 15% decrease.

## RWJUH Somerset Quality Fair

### Somerset Interdisciplinary Rounds (IDR): Plan for the Hospital Day, Plan for the Hospital Stay

RWJUH Somerset's annual Quality Fair highlighted various quality improvement initiatives underway throughout the hospital, including an interdisciplinary rounds initiative that has engaged nurses, hospitalists, care management staff, social workers and physical therapists to help streamline communication, maximize utilization of resources and enhance care quality and patient throughput.

This poster presentation showed that the inpatient average length of stay decreased by 9.6% between the first and second half of the year while improving cost efficiency. In addition, survey feedback showed that the rounds contributed to a better understanding of the patient's clinical care and treatment, improved job satisfaction and more effective communication and teamwork among health care providers. This poster presentation was also selected for inclusion at the RWJBH Quality Fair.

Nurse participants: Angela Daly, MSN, RN;  
Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNI; Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC; Kashawna Still, DNP, RN, PCCN; Yesenia Zwiren, BSN, RN;  
Beth Vergara, MSN, RN, RN-BC

Additional participants: Alyssa Kizun (Care Management); Karen Kowalenko, DO (Care Management); Narinder Dhillon-Athwal, MD (Hospitalists); Deb Fugaro (Rehabilitation Services)



## RWJUH Somerset Awards and Recognitions

The following national awards and recognitions mark the dedication and efforts of the entire RWJUH Somerset team – including nurses throughout the hospital – in maintaining a strong focus on patient safety and quality.

### Leapfrog “A” Patient Safety Score



RWJUH Somerset received a Leapfrog “A” Patient Safety Grade for Fall 2024, reflecting the highest level of commitment to patient safety.

### Healthgrades Quality Achievements

Healthgrades honored RWJUH Somerset with the following designations in 2024:



- Designated among America’s 250 Best Hospitals, ranking in the top 5% nationwide for overall clinical performance



- Designated among America’s 100 Best Hospitals for pulmonary care, stroke care, gastrointestinal care, gastrointestinal surgery and critical care



- Received Specialty Excellence Awards in neurosciences, stroke care, pulmonary care, gastrointestinal care, gastrointestinal surgery and critical care, all ranking in the top 5% of the nation



- Received a Specialty Excellence Award in surgical care, ranking among the top 10% in the nation



- Earned 5-Star Ratings for colorectal surgeries, vaginal delivery and C-section delivery and the treatment of heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, COPD, pneumonia, GI bleeds, bowel obstructions, sepsis, respiratory failure and hip fractures



In addition, in integrating technology to advance patient care, the hospital earned “Most Wired” recognition from the College of Health Care Information Management Executives (CHIME), scoring a Level 10 on a 1-10 scale.



### U.S. News & World Report Recognitions

The hospital was recognized as “high performing” in hip replacement surgery and maternity care in the *U.S. News & World Report 2024-25 Best Hospitals* rankings and ratings.

### Additional Specialty Recognitions and Accreditations



RWJUH Somerset’s Steeplechase Cancer Center completed a successful virtual site visit to earn reaccreditation by the Commission on Cancer, a quality program of the American College of Surgeons.



RWJUH Somerset earned The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval for total knee and total hip replacement surgery and its acute myocardial infarction program.



The American Heart Association honored RWJUH Somerset with the following quality awards:

- Get With the Guidelines® Stroke Gold Plus quality achievement award, recognizing the quality care provided to stroke patients
- Target: Stroke™ Honor Roll award, recognizing efforts to reduce the time between a stroke patient’s arrival at the hospital and when they are treated with clot-busting drugs
- Target: Type 2 Diabetes™ Honor Roll, recognizing the specialized care provided to patients with diabetes who are hospitalized due to a stroke

### Equity and Equality Recognitions

RWJUH Somerset became the first hospital in New Jersey and only the fourth hospital or health system in the country to earn the prestigious Health Equity Accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance. In addition, the hospital was designated as a “Leader in LGBTQ Health Care Equality” by the Human Rights Campaign.



## Professional Nursing Certifications

Congratulations to the following nurses for achieving certifications in their specialties in 2024:

Arayna Janae Brack, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, Registered Nurse Certified Inpatient Obstetrics Nurse

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Catalina Cordero-Zuniga, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, Registered Nurse Certified Inpatient Obstetrics Nurse

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Kathleen Corisdeo, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN, Maternal Newborn Nursing Certification

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Danielle Franco, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, Registered Nurse Certified Inpatient Obstetrics Nurse

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Carlos Gonzalez, BSN, RN, CEN, Certified Emergency Nurse

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Gideon Laxamana, BSN, RN, CV-BC, Cardio-Vascular Nurse—Board Certified

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Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP, Stroke-Certified Registered Nurse

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Laimis Naujokas, BSN, RN, CEN, Certified Emergency Nurse

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Simona Schneider, MSN, RN, APN, ANP-BC, American Society of Breast Surgeons Certification

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Alicia Setzer, BSN, RN, CGRN, Certified Gastroenterology Registered Nurse

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Alicia Vigniapiano, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, Registered Nurse Certified Inpatient Obstetrics Nurse

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Jazmine White-Johnson, BSN, RN, RNC-NIC, Registered Nurse Certified in Neonatal Intensive Care

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## Professional Appointments

Congratulations on these professional appointments:

Kathy Easter, MSN, RN, CCRN, Board of Directors/Treasurer, New Jersey Council of Magnet Organizations (NJCOMO)

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Kimberly McKevitt, BSN, RN, CWON, WCC, OMS, Board Member, Sayreville War Memorial High School Touchdown Booster Club; Executive Board Member, St. Stanislaus Kostka Home School Association

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Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC, Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) Board of Directors; ONS North Central Jersey Chapter

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Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN, Raritan Valley Community College School of Nursing Advisory Council

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Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, Board Member, Somerville/Branchburg Youth Football and Cheer Program; Board Member, Junior Somerville Pioneers Wrestling Club

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## Educational Achievements

Congratulations to the following nurses who earned degrees in 2024:

### DNP Degrees

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN, William Paterson University

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Evan Federici, DNP, RN, APN, Rutgers University

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Christian Meriscar, DNP, RN, APN, PMH-BC, Rutgers University School of Nursing

### MSN Degrees

Charlotte Agyemang, MSN, RN, Chamberlain University

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Melissa Keenan, MSN, RN, Chamberlain University

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Danielle Alabena, MSN, RN, CCRN, Chamberlain University

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Megan Kilkenny, MSN, RN, William Paterson University

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Rosita Baker, MSN, RN, APN, RNC-LRNN, Drexel University

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Garfield Morgan, MSN, RN, APN, AGNP-C, Chamberlain University

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Jamila Carter, MSN, RN, Montclair State University

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Leticia Rodriguez, MSN, RN, Sacred Heart University

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Liza Davidov, MSN, RN, University of Pennsylvania

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Maria Sarles, MSN, RN, CCRN, Grand Canyon University

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Kathleen Edge, MSN, RN, CCRN, PCCN, The University of South Alabama

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Christina Swiderski, MSN, RN, CCRN, Rowan University

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David Granda Carpio, MSN, RN, Rocky Mountain University

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Beth Vergara, MSN, RN, RN-BC, Sacred Heart University

### MHA Degrees

Debra Ferber, MHA, BSN, RN, RN-BC, University of Arizona Global

### BSN Degrees

Sarah Chardoussin, BSN, RN, Chamberlain University

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Joshua Manahan, BSN, RN, William Paterson University

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Cindy Cyriaque, BSN, RN, William Paterson University

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Kathleen Marsh, BSN, RN, SCRNP, Chamberlain University

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Nicole Falco, BSN, RN, Chamberlain University

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Ginine Sanon, BSN, RN, William Paterson University

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Mai Keruakous, BSN, RN, William Paterson University

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Sheila Villanueva, BSN, RN, Western Governors University

## Nurse Residency Program Graduates

Congratulations to the following nurses who completed RWJUH Somerset's Nurse Residency Program in 2024:

Michelle Amaoko, BSN, RN

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Katie Hwang, BSN, RN

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Sandy Perez, BSN, RN

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Miriam Antoun, BSN, RN

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Jiyeon Kang, BSN, RN

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Nallanie Ramsarran, BSN, RN

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Chris John Bautista, ASN, RN

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Julia Lombardi, ASN, RN

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Diana Siguenza, ASN, RN

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Gianna Buonopane, BSN, RN

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Sarah Machere, BSN, RN

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Samantha Vasquez, BSN, RN

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Angel Lou Corral, BSN, RN

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Jennifer Medeiros, ASN, RN

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Bhavya Yalamanchili, BSN, RN

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Gwyneth Deligente, BSN, RN

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Fabienne Oukessou, ASN, RN

*Carpe Diem*

EXIT



## NEW KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

RWJUH Somerset promotes a research-intensive environment and a culture of inquiry and innovation. Nurses at all levels participate in the Nursing Research Council, monthly Journal Club meetings and Nursing Informatics end-user teams to collaborate, plan, implement and evaluate practices, knowledge and innovations new to the organization.

## New Technology Ensures Balanced Workloads

In piloting an RWJBH initiative aimed at creating more strategic and balanced patient assignments among nurses, RWJUH Somerset transitioned from a manual process to Epic's Nursing Assignment Wizard software in its Medical/Surgical, Stepdown and ICU units. This required a collaborative, in-depth validation process to populate the tool with an optimal scoring algorithm.

With support from nursing leadership, nurses on the units completed weekly patient assessment surveys over the course of several months. The Nursing Informatics team then compared these assessments with corresponding in-depth chart audits, analyzing trends and proposing build changes and optimizations. The process required the analysis of more than 2,500 surveys and chart reviews, with dozens of work group decisions and optimizations.

"We compared perceived patient workload data with corresponding scores that we calculated from patient charts to get our bell curve as closely aligned as possible," says Informatics Site Manager Jerrybel Sarabia, MSN, MBA, RN. "While it took an incredible effort, this project was very rewarding, as it is helping to ensure a more equitable workload, greater nursing satisfaction and increased patient safety."

The Nursing Assignment Wizard pre-populates nurses on each shift, color codes patient acuity and provides early warning scores on potentially changing acuity to assist charge nurses in assigning patients. Because a patient's status can fluctuate throughout shifts, the software updates scoring every four hours so nurses can ensure a distribution of support where it's needed most.

"Our unit strives to be systematic, organized and balanced, and this technology helps us strategically achieve these goals," says Winona Campomanes, BSN, RN, RN-BC, 2-East assistant director of patient care. "Plus, our nurses can see the status of their patients at a glance, which helps them know where to focus their time accordingly."



## Boxed Breathing Research Progresses

A nursing research study underway at RWJUH Somerset is examining whether boxed breathing will lower the levels of pain and anxiety that some patients experience when undergoing total hip or total knee replacement surgery. This breathing technique is easy to teach to patients and has been shown to reduce physical stress symptoms in the body, have positive effects on emotions and mental well-being, increase mental clarity, energy and focus, and reduce anxiety and pain.

Nurse researchers have concluded the recruitment of 100 subjects for the study, with 50 in the control group and 50 in the intervention group. They are currently collecting chart information on pain/pain medication use and surveying participants on their experience with boxed breathing, whether it helped manage their stress or anxiety and how it impacted well-being.

## Nurses Provide Insight for Vertical Expansion

To ensure optimal workflow and patient care, RWJUH Somerset nurses, physicians, physical therapists, environmental services staff, transport staff and former patients provided feedback that helped shape the construction of a 76,000-square-foot, two-story vertical expansion project completed in 2024. This state-of-the-art addition will house a 22-bed unit for orthopedic and post-surgical patients with a therapy gym and a 23-bed medical/surgical unit, all with private rooms.

In addition to providing insight prior to construction, nurses toured the area during the process to make recommendations at the granular level. This included precise locations for items ranging from oxygen outlets and bloodwork supplies to computer workstations and patient communication boards.

"I'm particularly excited that the new layout has adjoining mini nursing workstations, each with windows to two patient rooms for continuous monitoring," says Rebecca Skalski, ASN, RN, Ortho Pavilion clinical nurse. "These private rooms are designed not only for streamlined, efficient care, but also to ensure comfort and promote healing."

## RWJUH Somerset Nurses Disseminate New Knowledge in 2024

### Publications

Angela Daly, MSN, RN, Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Jeannine Creazzo, MLIS, MBS, AHIP  
Impact of Group Coloring Therapy on Stress Reduction Among Nurses.  
*Nursing*. 2024;54(3):50-53.

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### Nursing Research Studies

Jazmin Cruz, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC  
Jennifer Green, BSN, RN  
Jenalee Jenkin, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC  
Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC  
Angela Daly, MSN, RN  
Helene Pasteur, BSN, BSPH, RN, FN-CSA  
Cesar Torres  
Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNL  
Exploring the Impact of Boxed Breathing on Anxiety and Pain in Total Hip Replacement (THR) and Total Knee Replacement (TKR) Patients on the Orthopedic Unit  
Kimberly McKeivitt, BSN, RN, CWON, WCC, OMS  
Nicolette Dallessio, BSN, RN, CWOCN  
Kaitlyn Gray, MSN, RN, RN-BC  
Natasa Livelli, BSN, RN  
Jazmin Cruz, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC  
Kaitlyn Fitzgerald, BSN, RN  
Mary Rowland, BSN, RN, CCRN  
Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNL  
Effectiveness of Pressure Injury Staging Algorithm  
Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNL  
The Impact of a Multimodal Education Program on Improving System-Wide CAUTI Rates  
Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNL  
Kimberly Bates, MSN, RN, CCRN-CMC  
Maria de Roma-Ragaza, MSN, RN, CNOR  
Kaitlyn Gray, MSN, RN, RN-BC  
Exploring Coping Strategies Used by Registered Nurses Working in a Community Medical Center During the COVID-19 Pandemic  
Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNL  
Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN  
Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC  
Jazmin Cruz, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC  
Ryan Norman, MI, AHIP  
Exploring the Impact of Expanded Nurse Manager Coverage on Job Satisfaction for Nurses and Their Perception of Leader Support and Engagement

### Internal Poster Presentations at RWJUH Somerset Quality Fair

Angela Daly, MSN, RN  
Impact of Group Coloring Therapy on Stress Reduction Among Nurses  
Carol DiCosmo, MSN, RN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, C-ONQS  
Post-Birth Warning Signs  
Ariana Passariello, BSN, RN  
Improved Patient Flow in the PACU  
Theresa Powell, BSN, RN  
Advanced Directives for New Patients Receiving Cancer Therapy

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### Internal Podium Presentations at RWJUH Somerset APP Skills Day

Emily Baez, MSN, RN, APN, AGACNP-BC  
Central Line Insertion  
Samantha Brocato, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC  
Sepsis Pearls  
Sheryl Ciccarelli, MSN, RN, APN, ANP-BC  
Palliative Care  
Dagmar Delgado, MSN, BS, RN, APN, AGACNP-BC, CCRN  
Nawal Jansen Vorback, DNP, RN, APN, ACNP  
Rino Rocket Insertion  
Janine Paglaicetti-Lynch, MSN, RN, APN, ACNPC-AG, CCRN, MEDSURG-BC  
Central Line Insertion

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### External Podium/Virtual Presentations

Jenalee Jenkin, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC  
Madison Johnson, ASN, RN  
Effects of Lavender Aromatherapy on Pain in Total Hip and Total Knee Arthroplasty, Virtual, RWJUH Hamilton  
Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC  
Oncology Nursing Certification Affects the Entire Cancer Care System, ONS Podcast, Episode 254