



# 2024 NURSING ANNUAL REPORT

**RWJBarnabas**  
HEALTH

Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital  
Hamilton

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# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



## Message from our Chief Administrative Officer

I am honored to share with you the Robert Wood Johnson University Hamilton (RWJUH Hamilton) 2024 Nursing Annual Report, showcasing some of the incredible accomplishments our nursing team has achieved over the past year. While no single report can capture the magnitude of all that our nurses do, the stories included here demonstrate the extraordinary impact RWJUH Hamilton nurses make on patient care, quality outcomes, innovation, staff well-being and so much more — day after day, year after year.

As a Magnet® recognized hospital in the process of preparing for reaccreditation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), we all know that this is a “journey” that requires time, energy, commitment, collaboration and passion. This consistently rings true for our nurses. I could not be prouder of the many ways our team embodies these attributes, while also exemplifying what excellence in nursing truly means.

Collaborative governance, education, wellness, technology, quality patient care and community engagement were key themes for our nursing team this year. At the same time, we embraced the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our nurses and recognize those who are true role models in our clinical care environments. This year, our Nursing Annual Report showcases how all these things come together and define what our culture of nursing is all about.

It is a privilege to have transitioned from chief nursing officer to serve as chief administrative officer at RWJUH Hamilton. In both roles, I have been inspired by our nurses and am truly grateful for the many ways they go above and beyond to make this hospital a great place to receive care, and an even greater place to provide care.

Our Magnet® designation is more than a reward or an achievement; it validates that nursing excellence is part of who we are as a community hospital. As you’ll see within these pages, our nurses have fully embraced this ongoing journey toward continuous improvement and innovation. It is a testament to their dedication to delivering the highest standard of care and shaping the future of health care. To quote Ralph Waldo Emerson, “It’s the not the destination, it’s the journey.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Breza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Breza" clearly distinguishable.

**Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC**

Chief Administrative Officer



## Message from our Chief Nursing Officer

Many of our patients call our nurses “extraordinary.” I could not agree more. As you read through the 2024 Annual Nursing Report, I hope you, too, feel a sense of pride and reassurance that Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (RWJUH Hamilton) and its team bring extraordinary care to our community. Some of our many stories from the past year appear in the pages that follow. We are excited to share them with you and are even more excited about those still to be written in the years ahead.

As chief nursing officer at RWJUH Hamilton, I am proud to share these accomplishments from 2024 and celebrate how these actions have positively impacted the care of our patients and their families. Our ANCC Magnet® designation echoes the high quality, hard work, skilled capabilities and excellence of our entire team.

RWJUH Hamilton is transforming health care in our region with an ongoing commitment to nursing excellence. Through nurse-led quality improvement initiatives, interdisciplinary collaboration and professional governance councils, our nurses continue to drive advances in care, evidence-based practice, research and education while influencing change throughout the organization.

In 2024, we received reaccreditation by The Joint Commission for Advanced Certification in Spine Surgery, Advanced Total Hip & Knee Replacement, along with Primary Stroke designation by the NJ Dept. of Health. We achieved our 15th “A” Hospital Safety Grade from the Leapfrog Group, earned honors as a High-Performing Hospital in Heart Failure and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) from *U.S. News and World Report* in their Best Hospitals 2024-2025 ratings and were named a five-star recipient for the treatment of stroke and sepsis as well as colorectal surgeries by Healthgrades. With a continued focus on our geriatric patients, our nurses were also just recognized by the National Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative for helping lead the way to ensure that every older adult receives age-friendly health care.

To all of our nursing staff members, I am truly grateful for all that you do to support our patients and each other, and to drive our profession forward. Thank you for advancing nursing care at RWJUH Hamilton!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Hutchinson', written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC**

Chief Nursing Officer



## NURSING LEADERSHIP



**Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC**  
Chief Nursing Officer



**Meghan McCord-Zaro, MSJ, BSN, RN, CPHRM**  
Vice President,  
Quality, Patient Safety & Risk



**Amy Pellicane, MSN, RN, OCN**  
Administrative Director,  
Cancer Center



**Erin Glospie, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, CIC**  
Director, Infection Prevention  
and Quality



**Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN**  
Administrative Director,  
Emergency Department and ICU



**Connie Mocer, MSN, AGNP-C**  
Administrative Director,  
Patient Care-Cardiovascular  
Services & Healthy Lives



**Jennifer Pirozzi, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CNOR**  
Administrative Director,  
Surgical Services



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



**Roseann Baker, MSN, RN**  
Director,  
Emergency Department  
and ICU



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



**Christina Delate, MSN, RN, CNOR**  
Director, Operating Room



**Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BA**  
Director, Patient Care,  
Medical/Surgical and Telemetry



**Ceara Philips, BSN, RN**  
Director, Patient Care



**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

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## IN MEMORIAM

As we celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, we also pause to reflect on the dedicated, caring nurse colleagues and care partners we recently lost, including the nurses below. We honor these nurses and others who are no longer with us by remembering the moments they shared and by carrying their attributes forward in our nursing practice.



### Deborah Babinchak, RN

In every workplace, there are individuals who rise above, whose presence and contributions leave an indelible mark on everyone they meet. Debbie Babinchak was one such person – a kind and reliable friend and colleague who inspired those around her. Debbie's consistency and reliability were the anchors of our team. At every challenge, her calm demeanor reassured us. Colleagues often recall her as the person who could be depended upon in times of need. She approached her work with a passion that motivated others to elevate their own standards, creating a productive and harmonious workplace. Debbie's legacy lives on through the values she instilled in her family, colleagues and the RWJUH Hamilton community. As we honor her memory through our actions, we are reminded of the profound impact she made during her lifetime.

- William A. Stout, Jr., BSN, RN, Administrative Coordinator



### Tracee Bachman, BSN, RN-BC

Tracee Bachman was a respected nurse and cherished colleague whose dedication to her profession was evident in her 22 years of committed service at RWJUH Hamilton. Her many roles included Telemetry nurse, Rapid Admit nurse, Nursing Informatics and Director of Quality and Patient Safety. She shared her expertise in all of these areas, enriching those who worked with her and encouraging them to become the best version of themselves. Tracee was a true leader known for her kind and patient demeanor. In her personal life, she valued and cherished her family and friends. She had a passion for travel, from skiing the mountaintops to enjoying the beaches of LBI. She was dedicated to her furry friends, her cats, and enjoyed their company. Her spirit will forever be a beacon of light for all who were fortunate enough to cross paths with her.

- Lori Huffert, BSN, RN, Patient Safety Coordinator



### Jane Fisher, RN

Jane Fisher was a compassionate caregiver whose dedication and kindness touched many lives. Beyond the scrubs, Jane was a source of encouragement, much laughter and love. She left a lasting impact on those fortunate enough to know her. Jane was always quick with a joke or a kind word. We shared many good times with Jane throughout her 40+ years of service at RWJUH Hamilton. Though Jane is no longer with us, her spirit lives on in the lives she's touched and the care she provided. We speak of Jane often, and we cherish the memories and honor the legacy of a remarkable soul.

- Christina Delate, MSN, RN, CNOR, Director of Patient Care, Operating Room



## About RWJUH Hamilton

Originally founded in 1941 as Trenton General Hospital, 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), New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive academic health system.

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, 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 15 "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 is also a designated NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) hospital.

RWJUH Hamilton served more than 7,600 inpatients in 2024, with more than 35,600 patients visiting the Emergency Department. The hospital performed nearly 5,000 surgical procedures. Nearly 1,400 patients underwent procedures in the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, with that number continuing to increase since the hospital began offering elective angioplasties. In addition, the Cancer Center had more than 10,400 patient visits to the radiation, infusion and medical practice areas.





## Mission, Vision and Values

The nursing team at RWJUH Hamilton embraces the mission, vision and values of RWJBarnabas Health:



**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

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.

## New CNO Inspires Transformational Leadership

Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC, was appointed chief nursing officer at RWJUH Hamilton in 2024. A member of the RWJUH Hamilton team since 2006, Hutchinson has advanced her career in roles including staff nurse, clinical coordinator, manager, director and most recently, assistant vice president of nursing. Hutchinson began her professional nursing career at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center in New York City. For 35 years, she has provided leadership to medical-surgical, telemetry and endoscopy nursing teams.

"Dawn is not only a great example of the professional growth opportunities available at RWJUH Hamilton, but she also is committed to supporting and inspiring growth among nurses across the hospital," says Lisa Breza, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, who served as chief nursing officer from 2010 to 2023 and is now chief administrative officer at RWJUH Hamilton. "We are incredibly proud of the caliber of talent and experience she continues to bring our nursing team."

"For nearly 20 years, I've had the opportunity to watch RWJUH Hamilton grow into the outstanding hospital it is today, and our nursing team has been integral to that success," says Hutchinson. "In addition to continuing to advance our long tradition of nursing excellence, I look forward to fostering professional development and career ladders that engage our nurses on all levels and support the next generation of nursing leaders."



Pictured left to right are Dawn Hutchinson, CNO; Lisa Breza, CAO at RWJUH Hamilton; and Maureen Harding, SVP, Patient Care Services at RWJBarnabas Health.



## Huron Rounding Improves Patient Experience

In an initiative designed to enhance patient satisfaction, support staff engagement and improve patient outcomes, RWJUH Hamilton fully integrated Huron Intelligence Rounding as a daily rounding tool across inpatient units and in the Emergency Department. Linked to the Epic electronic health record and accessed via an app on a work cell phone or unit iPad, this advanced web-based technology fosters consistent, structured interactions during rounds with patients and families. Huron technology provides tools, checklists and questions for clinical and nonclinical rounding, giving senior leadership, nursing leaders and the Patient Experience team the ability to track and trend rounding data and address patient feedback in real time.

Rounding questions are designed to help build rapport, capture positive feedback and identify areas for improvement. This uniform questioning helps ensure that key standards of performance are being met by reinforcing

quality measures, incorporating recognition for excellence and supporting the ability to remediate any issues in a proactive and timely manner prior to patient discharge. The RWJUH Hamilton team also had the opportunity to add and customize questions in 2024, including a central line audit, CAUTI audit and caregiver questions.

Since the implementation of Huron rounding, patient satisfaction ratings have improved across various domains, including communication with nurses, nurses treating patients with courtesy and respect, nurses listening carefully, communication about medications, responsiveness of hospital staff and quietness of the hospital.

"Huron technology improves our ability to work collaboratively as a team to identify, escalate and resolve concerns very quickly," says Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN, director of Patient Care. "Our patients know that we're taking their feedback seriously, enabling them to focus more fully on healing."





## Joint Commission Accreditation Site Visits

In 2024, RWJUH Hamilton and its Orthopedic Center of Excellence received reaccreditations from The Joint Commission, the nation's largest health accreditation agency, for Advanced Certification in Spine Surgery and Advanced Total Hip & Knee Replacement as well as first-time Primary Stroke Center Certification. In assessing continuous quality improvement efforts, The Joint Commission evaluated RWJUH Hamilton against performance standards across numerous dimensions, including emergency management, environment of care, infection prevention and control, leadership, medication management and rights and responsibilities of the individual.

Preparing for the reaccreditations involved a multidisciplinary team effort in which departments across the hospital – including nursing, leadership, informatics, rehabilitation and case management – collaborated to ensure that all aspects of care met and exceeded the standards set forth by The Joint Commission. Nurses were also instrumental in providing education to staff through daily huddles, team meetings, one-on-one education, classes, documentation review and coaching support.

As part of the reaccreditation process, The Joint Commission conducted multiple on-site visits with different surveyors during the same week. Surveyors met with clinical staff, reviewed documentation, interviewed team members at all levels and spoke with patients.

“Our entire team was highly engaged and spoke openly and confidently about the high-quality care they provide to patients,” says Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BA, director of Patient Care, Medical/Surgical and Telemetry. “The surveyors recognized the collegial balance we’ve cultivated across departments and spoke highly of our knowledge base.”

“These accreditations highlight our commitment to ensuring the best experience for our patients, from pre-operative education through surgery and recovery as well as in stroke recovery and rehabilitation,” adds Lisa Breza, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, chief administrative officer at RWJUH Hamilton. “We were very proud to hear how impressed the surveyors were with our level of care.”



## First “Conversations with Leaders” Event

In recognition of National Leadership Day on February 20, 2024, RWJUH Hamilton held an inaugural “Conversations with Leaders” event. More than 30 team members – including many nurses – engaged in conversations with senior leadership and department leaders in a round-robin format. This two-hour event provided the opportunity to learn more about career paths and network with leadership and fellow team members.

“I truly enjoyed speaking with different people to hear where they came from and how they became leaders within the institution,” said attendee Cindy Mazurkiewicz, MSN, Ed, RN, clinical coordinator of the PACU. “Everyone has a different journey, but one story really resonated with me. It drove home the point that we can all succeed as long as we put our minds to something and have strong support.”







## 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 Nursing Practice Council

The RWJUH Hamilton Professional Nursing Practice Council (PNPC), chaired by Chief Nursing Officer Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC, 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.

### Professional Governance Council

The hospital's Professional Governance Council is comprised of nursing representatives from unit-based departmental councils who meet monthly 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. The Professional Governance Council brings ideas and changes to the RWJUH Hamilton Professional Nursing Practice Council.

Professional Governance Council chair Cassidy Ritter, BSN, RN, represents RWJUH Hamilton at the RWJBH Professional Practice Nursing Council meetings. In addition to sharing new knowledge and best practices with council members across the system, they also 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 Professional Governance Council. These councils work on unit-based projects and identify opportunities for evidence-based practice changes and improvements. The unit chairs share their recommendations at the Professional 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 Meghan McCord-Zaro, MSJ, BSN, RN, CPHRM, vice president, Quality, Patient Safety and Risk. 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.

## Nursing Workplace Environment and Staffing Council (NWESC)

Co-chaired by Ryan Brevogel, BSN, RN, the Nursing Workplace Environment and Staffing Council (NWESC) aims to improve employee satisfaction by utilizing the six pillars of the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments conceptual framework (skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition and authentic leadership). Together, these pillars help promote a healthy work environment and maintain staff engagement and satisfaction.



## Epic End User Council

Led by Kavita Ali, MSN, RN, manager of Corporate Clinical Informatics, the Epic End User Council promotes and advocates for nursing care supported by technology in clinical settings, driving improvements in care delivery through the evaluation, monitoring and recommendation of enhancements. It fosters collaboration and communication across all levels of nursing, encouraging feedback, new ideas and discussions while providing leadership, expertise and guidance in nursing informatics to achieve organizational goals.



## New Emergency Department Committees

In aligning with RWJBH's mission, vision and values, RWJUH Hamilton's Emergency Department (ED) leadership and front-line staff collaborated throughout 2024 to create intradepartmental committees that focus on staff professional development and safe, clinically excellent, patient-centered care. These include a Professional Development Committee focused on activities such as supporting team members in achieving certifications and sharing evidence-based research, an Employee Engagement Committee that fosters employee and patient satisfaction and a Shared Governance Unit-Based Council that supports personal and professional growth.

In addition, individual ED committees were formed to focus on pediatrics, trauma, stroke, geriatrics, safety/falls and health care-associated infections. Each committee has engaged nurses and other team members to develop ongoing educational opportunities and best practice strategies to ensure optimal patient care.



## Patient Safety Council

Led by Meghan McCord-Zaro, MSJ, BSN, RN, CPHRM, vice president, Quality, Patient Safety and Risk, 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.

*RWJUH Hamilton nurses from the above councils also participate in various RWJBH collaboratives to facilitate the sharing of ideas and best practices across the system.*





Pictured are Lisa Breza, CAO at RWJUH Hamilton; Nina Melker, RWJUH Hamilton Board Member; Nancy Holecek, Executive Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer of RWJBH; Dawn Hutchinson, CNO at RWJUH Hamilton; 2024 Nursing Award recipients of RWJUH Hamilton; and Mark E. Manigan, President and Chief Executive Officer of RWJBH.

## 2024 NURSING AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals, who received these distinct honors at an awards ceremony during National Nurses Week in May 2024.

Magnet Nurse of the Year

### Stacie Mague, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

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

### Feliciano Jimenez, MSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

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 that they do.



Exemplary Professional Practice Award

### Cassidy Ritter, BSN, RN – ICU

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

**Cynthia Casale, RN – PACU**

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.

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Nursing Mentor Award

**Natasha Terilus, MSN, RN, CCRN – ICU**

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.

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Nursing Quality Award

**Stephen Gwiadzowski, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2**

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.

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Clinical Tech Award

**Flora Leone – ICU**

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.

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Unit Secretary Award

**Sophia Hardwick – Lakefront Tower 2**

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.

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Physician/LIP Collaboration Award

**Ronaldo Go, 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.

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Friend of Nursing

**Lorena Allendes, Environmental Services**

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 NURSE LEADER AWARDEES

In 2024, RWJUH Hamilton held the inaugural DAISY Nurse Leader Awards, celebrating two nurses who lead with compassion, mentor their teams and foster an environment of compassionate care.



#### Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC – Chief Administrative Officer

According to her nominator, “Lisa began as a staff nurse here fresh out of nursing school. Over the years she has worked in almost every discipline within the hospital, served as leader in multiple departments, was our chief nursing officer for over a decade, acted as our pro-tempore chief administrative officer and now holds that title permanently. She leads by example and is always available to anyone in this organization, regardless of title, discipline or tenure. Under her leadership, this hospital has become a nurse-led, innovative, top-tier provider of care to the community.”



#### Amy Pellicane, MSN, RN, OCN – Administrative Director, Cancer Center

Pellicane's nominator wrote that she has been instrumental in helping underserved populations access cancer screenings for early detection. They stated, “Amy creates an environment of trust, compassion and respect. She encourages her staff to continue to develop professionally by advancing their education and national certifications. Amy is accessible, available and responsive to the needs of her team. She encourages her team members to be autonomous problem-solvers and critical thinkers. Amy is a compassionate leader who advocates for her team by addressing their needs.”

### DAISY NURSE EDUCATOR AWARDEE

RWJUH Hamilton also bestowed a DAISY Nurse Educator Award in 2024 to the following exemplary nurse educator.



#### Cindy Russo, MSN, RN-BC, APN, C – Nurse Educator

Russo's nominator wrote, “Cindy has always been very involved in the training of new nurses and techs, taking a personal interest in the success of new graduate nurses as well as seasoned nurses. She is exceptionally knowledgeable in her field but is always willing (and eager) to learn new things. She has made such an impact on her unit's certification rate, the rate of professional advancement participants and the unit's desire to conduct research studies – she has no equal! I am proud to call her a colleague, and I often sit in awe of her dedication to the success of her nurses, techs and ancillary staff.”



## DAISY AWARDEES

Congratulations to the following RWJUH Hamilton nurses, who earned DAISY Awards in 2024

### Andi Aggarao, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2

In nominating Andi, a patient wrote, “I am new to NJ...and Andi gave me the sense that I belong here. Her attention to all of her patients makes you feel as if you are the only one under her care. She will talk to you as if you are old friends...Her bedside manner goes above and beyond knowing the overnight shift is hard and more tiring than working the day shift. I know; I did it for years – but Andi doesn’t show it at all...Andi has got to be the best [nurse] I ever had...Words cannot express nor are enough to describe Andi and the care she gave me nor the kindness she showed me.”

### Senita Cuffy-Arku, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

In the words of a patient’s family member, “Words cannot express the compassionate, competent, high-quality care that Senita showed my family as we were forced with the most gut-wrenching decision we’ve had to make for our mom. Her presence, whether it was lending an ear, advising or offering a hug, helped us navigate mom’s transition into hospice. The warmth and love she provided us goes above and beyond what is expected of a bedside nurse – she has a gift that is beyond words and something that I will cherish having experienced...She is the epitome of nursing excellence, care and compassion.”

### April Greene, RN – ICU

A patient’s family member wrote, “I met April when my father was put on life support. Her kindness and compassion for my family’s situation will forever be engrained in my memory. She provided not only my father with the best handle and care, but for me as well, as I spent the entire week an emotional wreck until he passed...She was so gentle and went out of her way to make sure my father was extra comfortable...I will truly never forget April and all that she did for my father and family until his last moments.”

### Jodi Monahan, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

In the words of a PCT, “Jodi is the kind of nurse every co-worker wants to work with. She is trustworthy, knowledgeable and kind. She makes an impact on everyone she comes in contact with, and her patients always make positive comments about her care. Spanish-speaking patients appreciate when she practices her Spanish with them. She is a great communicator and always gives fast feedback. When bringing any issues to her attention, she follows up very quickly, attending to patients’ needs in a timely manner. She works alongside us PCTs every step of the way.”



## IRIS AWARDEES

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 2024 awardees.



### Mitchell Marcik, PCT – ICU

According to his nurse nominator, “Mitchell has been a tremendous PCT and extraordinary co-worker. He has exemplified ambition in the workplace and has continued to excel, as evidenced by his advancement on his clinical ladder. His drive and desire to be better, know and learn more and be more helpful to colleagues has led him to increase his scope of practice as a PCT, including achieving IV insertion certification, ensuring our patients have appropriate IV access and drawing difficult labs with compassion, composure and professionalism. This air of diligence and professionalism is rooted in his hard work ethic.”

### Evelyn Vazquez, CCT – Telemetry North

In the words of a nurse colleague, “Evelyn is a phenomenal tech with years of experience. What I love about Evelyn is her gentleness, her attention to detail and her accountability. Most of the time when you ask something of Evelyn, she has already completed the task. Working with Evelyn, you know that your patients will be well taken care of...Each patient I have with her usually raves about her and they are always so thankful for all her kindness. Evelyn is such an asset to our team, and I am grateful to work alongside her.”



## CAREGIVER OF THE YEAR AWARD

At its 2024 Annual Autumn Fair, themed “The Roaring Twenties,” RWJUH Hamilton presented awards to individuals whose commitment to compassion, empathy and kindness exemplifies the hospital’s core values. Awardees included Ann Mancuso, MSN, RN, CHFNP, heart failure coordinator for the Healthy Lives Hamilton Program, who earned the Caregiver of the Year Award.





## 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. In 2024, RWJUH Hamilton provided 98 health and wellness programs, 15 unique support groups and 39 health screenings for community members.

In 2024, the Community Education Department facilitated in-person, hybrid and virtual community outreach events and classes that reached more than 19,000 people. This included more than 250 unique 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 2024, RWJUH nurses and other team members participated in various drives and events to support those in need throughout the community. This included filling more than 120 backpacks with school supplies for Hamilton Township School District students, donating baskets to support food security and providing outreach in underserved areas in Trenton.





### Partnering for a Teachers' Day of Wellness

As part of a new partnership with the Hamilton Township School District, RWJUH Hamilton community education, hospital and cancer center nurses joined fellow team members to host a Teachers' Day of Wellness event for the district's professional development day. Sponsored by RWJUH Hamilton's Community Health Department and RWJ Fitness & Wellness Hamilton, the event was open to 300 Hamilton Township teachers and staff from 23 schools across the district. The day featured an array of interactive sessions designed to enhance health and well-being, including screenings and education.



### Walking for Healthier Hearts

The 2024 Central Jersey Heart Walk was held at Mercer County Community College in October. RWJUH Hamilton nurses participated across various departments, including Cardiology, the Medical-Surgical Units and Administration. Guided by team captain Michele Suarez, BSN, RN, their efforts helped to raise funds and awareness in the fight against heart disease.





## 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.

## NOURISH™ Builds Competency and Confidence

Part of RWJBH's The 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 Hamilton launched its NOURISH program in September 2024 to meet the specific needs of new nurses on the medical/surgical and telemetry units (Lakefront Tower 1, Lakefront Tower 2 and Telemetry North), helping to bridge the gap between nursing school and clinical care.

New nurses participate in the NOURISH program for four weeks in a structured environment with tailored learning experiences to help them build skills in clinical judgment, time management and priority setting. They are paired with nurse preceptors who support this learning experience. In addition, NOURISH educator Jodi Monahan, BSN, RN, serves as the program's nursing professional development practitioner to customize experiences and optimize skill acquisition and competencies. Her role includes rounding, providing focused instruction, reinforcing learning and serving as a consistent presence for any questions or needs.

"In providing one-on-one mentorship support, my role allows for individualized teaching that exposes new nurses to learning opportunities beyond what they may typically see," says Monahan, who works 12-hour shifts to align with nursing schedules. "As I work with them to develop specific strengths, I can help them build confidence and alleviate some of the concerns they may have in being new to practice."

RWJUH Hamilton started a second cohort in December, expanding the program's reach to the Emergency Department and ICU. A total of 11 new nurses participated in 2024.

"Having Jodi as our NOURISH nurse educator gives nurses the opportunity to spend ample time on unique and complex procedures while encouraging critical thinking skills – not just how you do something, but why," says Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, NEA-BC, director of CPDIR at RWJUH Hamilton. "She's like an extension of nursing faculty to help new nurses move into acute care practice, ultimately benefitting our patients."

## Pediatric Emergency Trainings and Mock Codes

Recognizing a national and state priority to improve pediatric emergency care, RWJUH Hamilton proactively developed several nurse-driven Emergency Department (ED) initiatives to educate staff and boost pediatric readiness.

A new Pediatric ED Professional Development Committee was formed and six pediatric mock codes were held throughout the year, facilitated with the assistance of Roseann Baker, MSN, RN, director of Emergency Services and the ICU, and Jennifer Chaiken, BSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC, Emergency Department clinical nurse educator. These drills focused on precipitous labor and neonatal resuscitation and involved collaboration across disciplines, including nurses, technicians, ED physicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists and unit secretaries.

"In addition to practicing for emergencies, the mock codes provided an opportunity for peers to learn from each other based on their individual past experiences," says Chaiken. "Through pre- and post-intervention surveys, we found that our team felt better prepared overall after the mock codes."

"We've also assessed pediatric-specific supply needs and have provided ongoing learning opportunities, such as online modules, a pediatric-focused secure chat in Epic and a communication board that lists 'pediatric pearls' of information," adds Baker, who was appointed the pediatric nurse liaison for an RWJBH pediatric ED collaborative. "Our team has been very engaged in broadening their pediatric emergency skills and knowledge."





## NICHE Leadership Program Prompts Falls Project

RWJUH Hamilton is proud to carry the Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) designation in recognition of the commitment to providing exemplary evidence-based care for the senior population. In 2024, several nurses broadened this commitment by participating in an in-depth NICHE Leadership Training Program offered by New York University – including Roseann Baker, MSN, RN; director of Emergency Services and Intensive Care; Jennifer Chaiken, BSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC, Emergency Department clinical nurse educator; Lisa Egbert, BSN, RN, Emergency Department clinical coordinator and Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN, administrative director of Emergency Services and Intensive Care.

At the course's three-month mark, these participants developed and presented a falls prevention project to RWJUH Hamilton's senior leadership team and the Patient and Family Advisory Council.

"We built on the inpatient team's efforts to reduce falls by proposing to expand fall prevention steps in the Emergency Department," says Baker. "Since seniors make up about a third of the population we serve, we want to ensure better, safer care in what is often the first stop on a hospital visit."

In collaboration with an Emergency Department Geriatric Committee, the team provided falls education for nurses and staff while improving the environment and adding geriatric-specific equipment. New additions have included better lighting, clocks with improved visibility and safer positioning, yellow blankets to indicate fall risk and activity carts that include items like reading glasses, magnifying glasses, sound amplifiers and Posey jackets.

"Even one fall is too many, so it's important to do everything we can to minimize that risk," adds Chaiken. "Plus, when we make the environment safer for seniors, we're making it safer for everyone."

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## New Graduate RN Residency Program

RWJUH Hamilton prioritizes a successful transition to practice for new graduate registered nurses (RN), commonly referred to as a nurse residency program. As part of the RWJBarnabas Health New Graduate RN Residency Program, RWJUH Hamilton coordinates with Danielle Hillard, MSN, APN, CPNP, NPD-BC, CCRN, who serves as the Graduate RN Residency Program Director. Tim Ryan, MSN, RN, CEN, Nursing Professional Development Practitioner, Center for Professional Development, Innovation, and Research (CPDIR), is RWJUH Hamilton's campus coordinator for this program. Recognizing the challenges faced by these advanced beginner RNs, the residency program focuses on building competence and confidence in an effort to assimilate new graduate RNs to the organization, while creating effective, safe, and compassionate nurses. The CPDIR educators are charged with onboarding all new RNs to the hospital, and are committed to providing the education and clinical resources needed for a successful transition to practice. New graduate RNs hired into our residency program complete an orientation program that includes a structured curriculum, including didactic, simulation, and bedside learning with a preceptor. It is RWJUH Hamilton's goal to provide these new RNs with an overview of the hospital as well as nursing foundational practice competencies and other organizational requirements.



## New Ostomy Support Group

Recognizing an unmet need for ostomy support in Mercer County, RWJUH Hamilton launched a quarterly Ostomy Support Group open to anyone with an ostomy along with family members and caregivers. The group features guest speakers, provides education and shares useful advice on life with an ostomy.

“Our participants are enjoying the opportunity to connect while learning tips for managing their health,” says Kelly Knox, BSN, RN, CWCN, certified inpatient wound care nurse and support group facilitator. “The group has enabled people to support each other, form new friendships and even connect outside of the meetings.”



## NWESC Promotes 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.

The NWESC team continued the initiative “A Walk in My Shoes” in 2024, with a total of 91 nurses participating since the program's inception. This team-building activity – now integrated into the RWJUH Hamilton Orientation Program – has enabled clinical nurses to shadow nurses in other departments so they can gain insight and expand perspectives on what others experience while understanding how staff can better support each other across units. Through this initiative and others, NWESC creates a forum of participative leadership and amplifies the voices of bedside nurses.

## Schwartz Rounds Impart Compassion for Caregivers

RWJUH Hamilton offers Schwartz Center Rounds™ through the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, giving team members the opportunity to take time for self-care, share perspectives, address social and emotional challenges and reflect on the human connections in health care. These sessions are guided by interdisciplinary team members through presentations and dialogue in a supportive environment.

In 2024, the following sessions were held at RWJUH Hamilton, all receiving positive feedback from attendees:

- **Being Mortal: When We are the Patient**
- **Things They Never Told Me: What I Learned on the Job**
- **Working Behind the Scenes: ‘Invisible’ Team Members**
- **I’m Worried About You: When Patient Choices Aren’t Aligned with Ours**
- **Humor in the Hospital: Laughter is Good Medicine**

“In presenting at the Being Mortal session, I shared my experience of having orthopedic surgery at RWJUH Hamilton and how much I relied on the nurses,” says Kelly Knox, BSN, RN, CWCN, certified inpatient wound care nurse. “It was comforting to receive excellent care from my work family. It also helped me better understand our patients’ perspectives and how important it is to offer ample emotional support.”



## Infection Prevention Initiatives

Nurses and other team members at RWJUH Hamilton continued to make great strides in infection prevention throughout 2024, including the following initiatives.

- Nursing leaders, clinical coordinators and Erin Glospie, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, CIC, director of Infection Prevention and Quality, worked together to leverage an Epic chat feature now used during infection prevention rounds to resolve any concerns more quickly by instantly messaging physicians and other providers. With one chat for catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) and central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) and another for *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff), this process has helped reduce infection rates.
- In a hospital-acquired C. diff protocol implemented in 2024, nurses were empowered to place sample collection orders to test for C. diff when indicated to proactively identify this infection earlier, leading to earlier treatment, a better patient experience and improved patient outcomes. As an extra layer of safety, Glospie conducts chart reviews to identify anyone who meets testing criteria and provides this information to nurses, who verify whether orders should be submitted. This initiative identified more than 80 community-onset cases in 2024, demonstrating that the vast majority of infections happened prior to hospitalization.
- Glospie and Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN, director of Patient Care, developed a CAUTI auditing tool that has been integrated into Huron rounding to help ensure the earliest safe removal of catheters to help prevent infections.
- Based on input from Phillips and Telemetry Clinical Nurse Educator Stephanie Caduhada, MSN, RN, CCRN, NPD-BC, the Telemetry team began using chlorhexidine wipes – which are typically used to prevent CLABSI – for patients with catheters, helping to also prevent CAUTI. Following the trial on Telemetry, all units are now using the wipes.
- Through the efforts of the RWJUH Hamilton ICU/critical care team and respiratory therapists, the hospital achieved a remarkable record of 13 years of zero ventilator-associated pneumonias.



## RWJUH Hamilton Awards and Recognitions

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



### Top Leapfrog Safety Grades

The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit run by employers and other large purchasers of health benefits, awarded RWJUH Hamilton Hospital Safety Grade “A” ratings in both spring and fall 2024. Developed under the guidance of a national expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital

Safety Grade uses publicly available hospital safety data to assign grades to more than 2,700 U.S. acute-care hospitals twice per year. These ratings mark the hospital's 14th and 15th Safety Grade “A” awards, reflecting the high-quality care provided for patients.

### Highest Designation for Most Wired

RWJUH Hamilton earned a Performance Excellence Level of 10, the highest level of recognition, in the Acute category of the 2024 Digital Health Most Wired Survey from the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME). CHIME surveys more than 48,000 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.



### Healthgrades Quality Achievements

As a leading source of information in connecting patients and providers, Healthgrades independently analyzes approximately 4,500 short-term acute care hospitals across the country. In its latest ratings, Healthgrades honored RWJUH Hamilton with the following specialty excellence distinctions:

- Neuroscience:  
Five-Star Recipient for Treatment of Stroke
- Critical Care:  
Five-Star Recipient for Treatment of Sepsis
- Gastrointestinal:  
Five-Star Recipient for Colorectal Surgeries

### National Accreditations in Cancer Care

As an RWJBH facility in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute, the state's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, RWJUH Hamilton



received three-year accreditation from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC). To earn voluntary CoC accreditation, a cancer program must meet 34 CoC quality care standards, be evaluated every three years through a survey process and maintain levels of excellence in the delivery of comprehensive patient-centered care. The CoC Accreditation Program provides the framework for hospitals to improve care quality through various cancer-related programs that focus on the full spectrum of cancer care.

In addition, RWJUH Hamilton received National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) recognition from the American College of Surgeons. This accolade is granted to centers committed to providing the best and most comprehensive care to patients with breast cancer.

### Best Hospitals Heart Failure and COPD Ranking

*U.S. News & World Report* named RWJUH Hamilton to its 2024-2025 Best Hospitals as a High Performing Hospital for Heart Failure and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). This is the highest distinction a hospital can earn for the Best Hospitals Procedures & Conditions ratings. These annual ratings are designed to assist patients and their health care providers in making informed decisions about where to receive care for challenging health conditions or elective procedures. *U.S. News & World Report* evaluates nearly 5,000 hospitals across 15 specialties and 20 procedures and conditions.

## Nurse Certifications Expand Expertise

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, 40% of nurses have achieved certifications in their specialties.

Nurses who attained new certifications in 2024 included:

Sandra Barbecho, RN, RN-BC – Med-Surg Certification

Mary Beth Ditzler, RN, RN-BC – Med-Surg Certification

David Dressel, RN, RN-BC – Med-Surg Certification

Erin Glospe, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, CIC – Infection Control Certification

Stephen Gwiazdowski, RN, RN-BC – Med-Surg Certification

Lavina Israni, RN, BC-RN C-V – Cardiovascular Nurse Certification

Chidiebube Nwadiogbu, RN, CCRN – Critical Care Certification

## Professional Advancement on the Clinical Ladder

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

Sandra Barbecho, BSN, RN, RN-BC  
Med Surg – Lakefront Tower 2

Caitlyn Barden, BSN, RN – ICU

Sarmite Catalfomo, MSN, RN, PCCN – Telemetry North

Barb DeSalvo, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Lisa Egbert, BSN, RN – Emergency Department

Michelle Fraser, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Stephen Gwiazdowski, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2

Jamie Havens, RN – Telemetry North

Anuja Jadhav, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

Feliciano Jimenez, MSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

Kathy Lemmon, BSN, RN – Operating Room

Amanda Martucci, AD, RN – ICU

Colleen Petitt, BSN, RN – Cardiac Catheterization  
Laboratory

Stephanie Pownall, BSN, RN – Cardiac Intervention Suite

Naykis Sarvary, BSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

Michele Suarez, BSN, RN – Cardiology

Melrose Tan, BSN, RN, ONC – Same Day Surgery

Natasha Terilus, MSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

Melissa Wachino, BSN, RN – Emergency Department

### Clinical Nurse Level IV

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

Eunice Bamgbade, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC – Orthopedics

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

Caroline Voorhees, BSN, RN, CEN –  
Emergency Department

### Educational Achievements

Nurses who attained new degrees in 2024 included:

Christina Delate, MSN, RN, CNOR

Laarni Sun, BSN, RN

Lisette Suquilanda, BSN, RN

Natasha Terilus, MSN, RN, CCRN



## 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.



## Advanced Robotics for Spine Surgery

A certified Center of Excellence for Spine Surgery by The Joint Commission, RWJUH Hamilton expanded its spine surgery program with the addition of robotic-assisted surgery using ExcelsiusGPS® technology. Combining a robotic arm with full navigation capabilities, this technology offers constant tracking and real-time feedback that enables surgeons to make adjustments during surgery to ensure adherence to the surgical plan. The minimally invasive technology enhances precision while contributing to faster recovery times and reduced pain for patients.

Nurses and other surgical team members received hands-on education on ExcelsiusGPS® prior to its implementation for thoracic and lumbar spine surgeries.

“Our nurses are actively involved in these procedures from planning to completion, including ensuring appropriate supplies and instrumentation,” says Jennifer Pirozzi, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CNOR, administrative director of Surgical Services. “Like a GPS system, the robotic technology helps guide the team from point A to point B, increasing efficiency, reducing the impact on surrounding tissue and helping to decrease the length of stay.”

“In addition to helping fine-tune screw placement in the spine for more accurate alignment, the new system reduces X-ray exposure and time under anesthesia,” adds Michele Hunt, RN, CNOR, spine surgery coordinator. “Overall, this means better postoperative outcomes for our patients.”

## Impella® Technology Expands Interventional Cardiology Care

In expanding interventional cardiology treatment options for the community, RWJUH Hamilton began offering Impella® – the world’s smallest heart pump – to support patients experiencing cardiogenic shock. This percutaneous catheter-based technology allows the heart to rest and recover by temporarily assisting the pumping function of the heart to efficiently deliver blood and oxygen throughout the body. Nurses, physicians and staff from Pharmacy, Echocardiography, ICU, Critical Care and other areas collaborated to plan protocols for the new technology and participated in mock drills and extensive training on its use.

“This technology delivers better outcomes for our patients, and it’s empowering for our nurses to play a key role in facilitating the insertion procedure and providing specialized post-procedure care,” says Colleen Petitt, BSN, RN, clinical coordinator of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory and the H.H. Tuchman Cardiac Interventional Suite.

In 2024, RWJUH Hamilton also broke ground for the construction of a new 5,500 square foot, state-of-the-art Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory. Planning for the facility incorporated insight from nurses and other interventional cardiology staff to ensure streamlined, quality care. Throughout the year, nurses participated in periodic walkthroughs of the construction area to provide additional input on optimal patient flow.





Pictured are Ryan Brevogal, BSN, RN; Sarmite Catalfomo, MSN, RN, PCCN; Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN; Jamie Havens, RN; and Mark E. Manigan, President and Chief Executive Officer of RWJBarnabas Health.

## Nursing Research Highlighted at Quality Fairs

RWJUH Hamilton held its annual Quality Fair in April, with the following research projects involving nurses.

### Implementation of Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) House Rounds to Decrease Hospital Length of Stay

Samer Haddad, MD; Susan Hampton, RN, CCM

Undertaking a collaborative approach with RWJUH Somerset following its successful implementation of interdisciplinary rounds, RWJUH Hamilton initiated a similar program aimed at daily collaboration and early identification of any discharge and care transition barriers. Results showed an improvement in length of stay, a significant increase in physician engagement in interdisciplinary rounds and improved accuracy in the documentation and use of the estimated day of discharge to safely guide goals of care.

This poster was also selected as a podium presentation at the RWJBH Quality Fair.

### Improving the Press Ganey's CAHPS Patient Experience Score for "Communication with Nurses" on the Telemetry North Unit

Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN; Sarmite Catalfomo, MSN, RN, PCCN; Ryan Brevogal, BSN, RN; Jamie Havens, RN; Jenna Garzillo, RN

In this initiative, telemetry nurses conducted a literature review on evidence-based research focused on improving nurse communication with patients. Based on the evidence, the team implemented steps such as one-to-one coaching, the AIDET® communication framework and enhanced training to improve and expand interactions with patients and families. Results showed that increased rounding and enhanced communication and collaboration with patients and their families had a positive correlation to Press Ganey's Communication with Nurses CAHPS Score.



## Better Screening, Sweeter Outcomes

Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC

Because individuals with diabetes are at greater risk for postsurgical medical complications, this initiative engaged the multidisciplinary team to ensure multiple documentation verifications of HbA1C levels during perioperative testing to improve outcomes for patients undergoing total joint replacement and spine surgery. Working together, the team achieved HbA1C monitoring and documentation compliance of 100% for total hip replacement, total knee replacement and spine surgery patients.

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## Comfort Level of Nurses with Patient Mobilization in A Community Hospital Setting

Cynthia Russo, MSN, RN-BC, APN, C; Sarah Masco, MS, OTR/L, CLT-LANA; Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN-K, NEA-BC; Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BC; Katlyn Laba, RN, C; Stephanie Caduhada, MSN, RN, CCRN, NPD-BC; Nicole D’Orzio, PT, DPT

In an IRB-approved study aimed at improving outcomes for patients ages 65 and older, RWJUH Hamilton nurses and rehabilitation staff hypothesized that the implementation of a mobility-centered nursing education program would increase the comfort level of nurses and patient care technicians in mobilizing patients.

Pre-intervention data was collected over a six-week period, with 55 participants completing the survey. The study intervention was a 30-minute skills-based mobility training class attended by 112 participants in February 2024. In April 2024, the post-intervention survey was completed. The surveys assessed participants’ comfort level, their perception of how often they mobilize patients and gaps in their knowledge and perceived skills.

“The knowledge gained through our data analysis is guiding us in developing an educational plan for new hires and existing staff on mobilizing patients,” says Principal Investigator and Clinical Nurse Specialist Cynthia Russo, MSN, RN-BC, APN, C. “Next steps include developing a mobility program on Lakefront Tower 1, piloting the use of a mobility board on that unit and studying the impact on patient outcomes.”

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Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton



@RWJBarnabasHealth



Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital  
Hamilton

1 Hamilton Health Place  
Hamilton, NJ 08690

609-586-7900

[rwjbh.org/hamilton](https://rwjbh.org/hamilton)

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