

Nursing

ANNUAL REPORT

20
25



RWJBarnabas
HEALTH

**Robert Wood Johnson
University Hospital
Hamilton**





CONTENTS

1	LEADERSHIP MESSAGES
3	NURSING LEADERSHIP
4	ABOUT RWJUH HAMILTON
4	MISSION, VISION AND VALUES
5	TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
9	STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT
17	EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
25	NEW KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS



5

OUTPATIENT
SERVICES



Message from our Chief Administrative Officer

As Chief Administrative Officer of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (RWJUH Hamilton), I'm proud to share our 2025 Nursing Annual Report, which reflects the extraordinary dedication, professionalism and excellence of our nursing team. As a Magnet-recognized hospital, RWJUH Hamilton remains committed to the highest standards of nursing practice, innovation and a collaborative approach to patient-centered care, as you'll see within these pages.

I value the input from our Chief Nursing Officer, Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN, NEA-BC, and the entire nursing team as they work collaboratively with our staff to deliver exceptional care. As a nurse, I understand the importance of establishing listening posts to hear directly from our nursing teams. From "Breakfast with Breza" and "Huddles with Hutchinson" to "You Said, We Did," we are providing platforms where nurses and team members can make recommendations that improve safety, quality, employee engagement and patient experience. In turn, this further strengthens our support for the community and our broader health system. Our momentum is a direct reflection of focused leadership, teamwork and accountability across the organization.

Our 2025 achievements strongly align with our organizational strategic plan and demonstrate our commitment to excellence in patient care, a supportive work environment and the continuous professional development that advances nursing excellence. Our nurses have been instrumental in our quality outcomes, patient satisfaction, financial improvements and social impact. Every day, our nurses lead with integrity, advocate for our patients and families and achieve outstanding outcomes.

Here are just a few examples of achievements that make me proud:

- Our nursing practice plays a significant role in our CMS Star Rating.
- Our hard work has earned Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade 'A' ratings 17 consecutive times.
- We have achieved Level Two Recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, demonstrating our commitment to vulnerable seniors.
- We are recognized among the nation's top 100 Great Community Hospitals by Becker's Hospital Review, noting our dedication to clinical excellence, academic advancement and personalized care delivery.
- We've received Joint Commission recognitions as a Center for Excellence for Stroke, Spine, Hip and Knee Replacement.

On behalf of our senior leadership team and Board of Directors, thank you to our nurses for your unwavering commitment to our community. Your contributions strengthen our hospital and positively impact the lives of the patients and communities we serve every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa A. Breza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent.

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



Message from our Chief Nursing Officer

It is my distinct honor to present our 2025 Nursing Annual Report – a tribute to the extraordinary spirit, resilience and brilliance of our nursing team. This report is more than a summary of our accomplishments; it is a testament to our unwavering commitment to quality improvement initiatives, interprofessional collaboration, the lives we touch and the mission we serve.

As your Chief Nursing Officer, I am inspired daily by the grace and expertise our nurses bring to the bedside. We often say, “our teamwork is your best medicine,” a phrase we proudly state and even wear on T-shirts. Beyond a slogan, it is a promise. It is the invisible thread that connects our departments, strengthens our resolve and ensures that no patient or family member walks their journey alone.

As we reflect on a year of excellence, it's clear that our nurses have been the architects of innovation. By leading quality initiatives and mentoring the next generation of caregivers, our nurses have moved the needle on what is possible in health care. RWJUH Hamilton continues to define nursing excellence by securing its 17th consecutive Leapfrog ‘A’ safety rating through a dedicated focus on nurse-sensitive indicators and harm reduction. This commitment to safety is paired with record-high patient and family experience scores and national recognition for models of care rooted in compassion, proving that clinical expertise thrives when joined with a human touch.

I am proud to say we have expanded our research efforts, leveraging professional governance and the ANCC Magnet® model to empower our nurses to drive systemic change and lead innovation, particularly in patient mobility and ambulatory care. By transforming clinical inquiry into actionable evidence, we are not only advancing the nursing profession but also contributing to the evolution of health care science.

Furthermore, the hospital remains a premier destination for professional growth, supporting the next generation of caregivers through a robust Nurse Residency Program designed to build clinical competence and confidence.

As we look toward the future, we remain committed to elevating the professional practice of nursing and shaping a health care landscape that is safer, kinder and more innovative.

To our nurses: Thank you for your dedication, your innovation and your “heart work.” You are the soul of RWJUH Hamilton, and together, we will continue to make a lasting impact on the well-being of our patients, our people and the communities we call home.

Sincerely,

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

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

Nursing Leadership



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

Chief Nursing Officer



Meghan McCord-Zaro, MSJ, BSN, RN, CPHRM

Vice President, Quality, Patient Safety & Risk



Jennifer Borg, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CNOR

Administrative Director, Surgical Services



Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN

Administrative Director, Emergency Department and ICU



Connie Mocerri, MSN, RN, AGNP-C

Administrative Director, Patient Care, Cardiovascular Services & Healthy Lives



Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BA

Administrative Director, Patient Care, Medical/Surgical and Telemetry



Amy Pellicane, MSN, RN, OCN

Administrative Director, Cancer Center



Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC

Director, Disease Management



Christina Delate, MSN, RN, CNOR

Director, Operating Room



Erin Glospie, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, CIC

Director, Infection Prevention and Quality



Katlyn Laba, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC

Director, Patient Care, Lakefront Tower 1 & 2



Ivan Logarta, BSN, RN, CCRN

Director, Patient Care, Critical Care



Manmeet Mann, BSN, RN

Director, Emergency Services



Heather Nolan, BSN, RN

Director, Perianesthesia Services



Ceara Philips, BSN, RN

Director, Patient Care, Telemetry North and Medical Central



Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

Director, Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research



Jacqueline Ciccarelli, MSN, RN

Manager, Magnet Program and Nursing Performance Improvement



Sandra Haas, BSN, RN, CBN

Stroke and Bariatric Program Coordinator



Kelly Knox, BSN, RN, CWCN

Wound Care Specialist



Ann Mancuso, MSN, RN, CHFRN

Heart Failure Program Coordinator

About RWJUH Hamilton

Originally founded in 1941 as Trenton General Hospital, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (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 17 "A" Hospital Safety Grades from the Leapfrog Group, the gold standard in health care safety. In addition, RWJUH Hamilton has received Advanced Certification in Spine Surgery and Advanced Certification in Total Hip and Knee Replacement from the Joint Commission, along with Primary Stroke Center Certification.



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 and an Age-Friendly Health System.

RWJUH Hamilton served approximately 8,000 inpatients in 2025, while 38,000 patients visited the Emergency Department. More than 5,000 surgical procedures were performed, and 1,800 patients underwent treatment in the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory — with volumes continuing to grow following the introduction of elective angioplasties. The Cancer Center supported more than 12,500 patient visits across radiation, infusion and medical practice areas. In addition, the Community Education Department facilitated more than 1,300 programs, events and screenings, with more than 17,700 encounters aimed at improving the health and well-being of residents in Mercer County and beyond.

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.

Nurse Preceptorship Programs Support Growth and Retention

At RWJUH Hamilton, nurses across the hospital help support and develop the next generation of nursing professionals by empowering them with knowledge, encouraging their growth and positioning them for leadership roles. In 2025, this included the following programs and initiatives.

Newly Accredited Nurse Residency Program

In 2025, RWJBH – including RWJUH Hamilton – received Accreditation with Distinction from the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP®) for the Nurse Residency Program. This prestigious designation recognizes the program as a national leader in supporting new graduate nurses as they transition into professional practice. Accreditation with Distinction is the highest level of recognition awarded by PTAP, demonstrating that the program meets rigorous standards for structure, process and outcomes.

Fifteen new nurses entered RWJUH Hamilton's Nurse Residency Program in 2025, with 25 graduates. As part of the 12-month program, nurse preceptors and educators emphasize critical thinking, evidence-based practice and leadership development while supporting emotional and professional needs. Mentorship, support and group meetings continue throughout the year to provide a solid foundation and reinforce skills.

RWJUH Hamilton's Nurse Residency Program is supplemented by the Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support and Health (NOURISH™), a unique model for promoting competency and confidence among newly licensed nurses on patient care units. Launched in September 2024 under the Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR), this four-week program is built into the first month of orientation. It pairs new nurses with nurse preceptors and features tailored learning experiences with NOURISH Educator Jodi Monahan, BSN, RN, to further develop specific strengths. Since its launch, NOURISH has had 21 participants with a 95% retention rate.

"The literature is quite clear: preparing nurses to be competent and confident during their first year makes a significant difference in nurse retention," explains Tim Ryan, MSN, RN, CEN, nursing professional development practitioner, CPDIR. "We're well above the national mean for nurse retention because we take such good care of our nurses – and having NOURISH available here is icing on the cake."





A Model for Precepting Emergency Department Nurses

At the New Jersey Emergency Nurses Association (NJENA) 46th Annual Emergency Care Conference in Atlantic City, RWJUH Hamilton had the opportunity to showcase its nurse preceptor expertise through a professional education lecture titled “Married...With Orienteer: Precepting in the ED,” presented by Jennifer Chaiken, MSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC, clinical nurse educator for the Emergency Department.

Chaiken discussed various preceptorship models, explaining how precepting is a pivotal nursing role that requires 100% commitment to both the process and the orientee. She noted that precepting is unique in the non-routine setting of the Emergency Department, making the Married State Preceptorship Model – in which preceptor and orientee are always together – particularly effective. In this hectic environment, nurse preceptors must be able to constantly verbalize their process while moving quickly and multitasking.

“Strong preceptorship builds a culture of safety and patient-centered care while serving as the key to retention,” says Chaiken, who received positive feedback at the conference and follow-up requests for additional advice. “Our preceptorship model and supportive culture ensure that there will always be teaching moments throughout the process.”

RN Preceptors Mentor Student Nurse Externs

During the summer, RWJUH Hamilton nurse preceptors worked side-by-side with six student nurses as part of the RWJBH Student Nurse Externship Program. Students gained hands-on experience to bridge the gap between classroom education and real-world clinical practice, enhancing their skills and confidence.

The program is not only a valuable experience for participants and preceptors, but it also helps create a pipeline of well-trained nursing professionals for the hospital. In fact, several RWJUH Hamilton patient care technicians participated in the 2025 program as part of their journey to becoming nurses.

“It’s an excellent learning opportunity,” says Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, NEA-BC, director of Professional Development and Research and the liaison for the externship program at RWJUH Hamilton. “We supplement preceptor supervision with the opportunity to hone skills in the simulation lab and participate in specialty rotations for observation in departments like the Cath Lab and the OR. Students gain exposure to patient care settings, build confidence and develop critical clinical skills.”





Improving Nurse Communication Scores Through Family Updates

In assessing ways to improve patient satisfaction scores, RWJUH Hamilton team members noticed an opportunity to reduce readmission rates for Telemetry North geriatric patients. Understanding the critical role of family members in caring for these patients after discharge, a unit-based multidisciplinary team focused on enhancing family communication on the plan of care, medications and available resources.

With guidance from Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN, director of Patient Care, Telemetry North and Medical Central, they created a script that included information on point of care testing, nutrition, medication education and discharge resources that nurses shared with family members during daily phone calls between 1 and 4 p.m. Unit secretaries tracked compliance with completion and timely documentation, and a designated Epic chat supported communication.

In correlation with these efforts, the CAHPS Top Box score for “RNs kept me informed” increased from 67.29% to 90.91% and from the 37th percentile rank to the 95th percentile rank nationally. The results were presented at the RWJUH Hamilton Quality Fair, earning a podium presentation at the RWJBH 16th Annual Quality and Patient Safety Forum. Likewise, HCAHPS scores increased in three areas related to nurse communication.

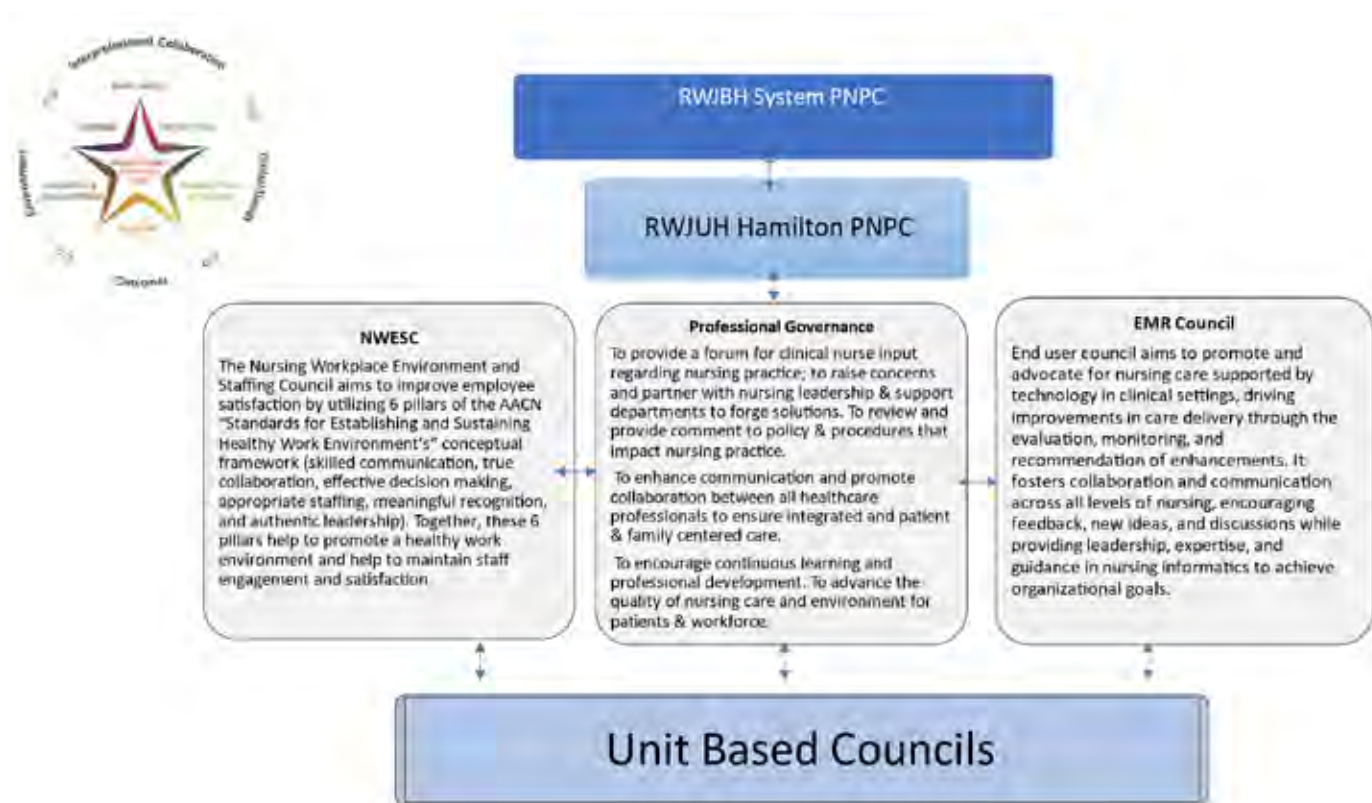
Phillips presented information on the project’s success on all Medical/Surgical and Telemetry floors and at two other RWJBH hospitals. RWJUH Hamilton has also incorporated this protocol into new team member orientation.

“The initiative has had a huge impact not only on communication and satisfaction, but also on continuity of care,” explains Phillips. “We’re passing the baton to families at discharge with all the information they need in a way they can understand. Feedback from families has been uplifting, and I’m proud of our entire staff for integrating the protocol into their daily processes.”



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, 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.

RWJUH Hamilton's Professional Governance Council Chair represents the hospital at the RWJBH System-Wide Professional Nursing Practice Council. In addition to sharing new knowledge and best practices with council members across the system, each chair solicits local feedback for policies and brings back insights that benefit 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 the chief nursing officer and 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 discussion while providing leadership, expertise and guidance in nursing informatics to achieve organizational goals.

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.

2025 Nursing Awards

Congratulations to the following individuals, who received these distinct honors at an awards ceremony held during National Nurses Week in May 2025.

Magnet Nurse of the Year

Cassidy Ritter, BSN, RN – ICU

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

Cynthia Russo, MSN, RN-BC, APN,C –
Center for Professional Development,
Innovation and Research

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

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

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

Katlyn Laba, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC –
Lakefront Tower 1 & 2

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

Nursing Mentor Award

Mary Beth Ditzler, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC –
Lakefront Tower 1

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



Nursing Quality Award

Robert Salm, BSN, RN – ICU

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

Clinical Tech Awards

Parthik Patel – ICU

Alexander Francois – Lakefront Tower 1

This award is given to PCTs who demonstrate keen knowledge in their role and communicate clearly, effectively and in a timely manner. The awardees display a passion for patient care through strong values in alignment with the culture and commitment of RWJUH Hamilton.

Unit Secretary Award

Magda Callery – Lakefront Tower 1

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.

Provider Collaboration Award

Cung Dinh, MD

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

Friend of Nursing Award

Maria Melendez – 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

Extraordinary Nurses Recognized with DAISY Awards

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 for their patients. The program has been adopted by health care organizations around the world.

DAISY Awardees

Congratulations to the following RWJUH Hamilton nurses, who earned DAISY Awards in 2025.



Loretta Padulchick, RN, OCN, INS - Cancer Center

A patient's spouse recognized the outstanding care her husband received, describing Padulchick as extremely efficient, knowledgeable, warm, gentle and compassionate. She also observed Padulchick ensuring that an elderly patient was eating enough by providing him with food she had prepared. The nominator wrote, "I was so impressed that she had gone out of her way to provide not just the medical care he needed but also the support and concern for the human being. She did this privately and quietly without any pomp or expectation of recognition. She used her time off to care for the health of this gentleman above and beyond the scope of her nursing responsibilities. She is not only an outstanding nurse but also a remarkable person very deserving of recognition and accolades."

Ellie Pellecchia, BSN, RN - ICU

Pellecchia received four DAISY nominations in 2025, earning the award in both spring and fall. One nominator wrote, "Her commitment to her patients makes her a true standout in the ICU. She embodies the values of integrity, putting the patient first, being proactive and innovative, maintaining speed and quality and fostering teamwork." A patient who received care for a longstanding injury wrote, "She is empathetic and kind, most importantly easing this process which is the benchmark of a quality nurse and the backbone to the nursing staff any great hospital needs to be successful." Additional nominations described Pellecchia as attentive, professional and compassionate while possessing a level of knowledge that had a calming effect during a difficult time - and noted that this career is her true calling.



Jessica Whyte, MSN, RN - Cardiac Intervention Unit

A patient's spouse described Whyte as "over the top!" and noted that Whyte needed to hold her husband's pulse site with her hands for 20 minutes yet didn't complain once. She shared that Whyte "was professional, kind, caring and very on point. Thank you, Jessica, for all you did for my husband!"

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 2025 awardees.

Taiquon Lee, CCT – Cardiac Intervention Unit

With two nominations, Lee was described as kind and caring, very professional and “top notch!” by one patient’s spouse. In addition, a patient in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab said that Lee was very accommodating, writing, “It was a great experience to be with a person who really cares...Taiquon is truly a diamond and a very nice person. There should be more people like Taiquon – he is the best!”



Stephen Moore, CCT – Lakefront Tower 1

With four nominations, Moore was complimented for his bedside manner and respect for the knowledge that families can provide. One patient said that he went out of his way to be helpful, writing, “I believe somebody who works this hard needs to be recognized...it was a pleasure having him around.” A patient’s sibling described Moore as a lifesaver who went above and beyond. In addition, a patient’s spouse stated that Moore is a fantastic tech who helped facilitate the healing process.

Business Leader of the Year

RWJUH Hamilton Chief Administrative Officer **Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC** was honored as Business Leader of the Year by the Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber at its 2025 Legacy of Leadership Annual Awards Dinner. The event celebrates the leaders, innovators and changemakers shaping the future of the Princeton Mercer Region.



Women CEOs to Know

Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC was recognized by Becker’s Hospital Review as one of the 2025 Women Hospital Presidents and CEOs to Know. This list highlights women hospital presidents and CEOs around the country who are expanding access to care, spearheading new initiatives and helping to close the gender gap in leadership.



Caregiver of the Year Award

At its “A Night in Nashville” fundraising event, RWJUH Hamilton presented awards to individuals whose compassion, empathy and kindness exemplify the hospital’s core values. **Connie Mocer, MSN, RN, AGNP-C**, administrative director of Patient Care, Cardiovascular Services and Healthy Lives, was honored with the Caregiver of the Year Award for her unwavering commitment, kind approach and ability to make every patient feel seen, heard and valued.

Nurses Embrace 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.



A Key Role in Community Health Improvement Plans

Every three years, the RWJUH Hamilton Community Education Department helps facilitate a community health needs assessment developed in conjunction with The Greater Mercer Public Health Partnership to ensure that outreach initiatives are meeting the evolving needs of people throughout the region. Analysis of data from a 2024 assessment determined that top priorities include food insecurity/healthy eating, health care access/chronic disease and behavioral health. Throughout 2025, RWJUH Hamilton nurses were instrumental in developing and staffing programs and initiatives aimed at meeting these needs.

In collaboration with other disciplines, nurses participated in the development of a community health improvement plan (CHIP) and a system improvement plan (SIP). They served as frontline experts on the community's health, offering insight on health trends, disease prevalence and community education programs that would be most beneficial to improve outcomes. They helped ensure that the improvement plans reflected both collected data and their lived experience in working with the community. Nurses also served as advocates for vulnerable populations and participated in community health fairs, screenings and school-based programs.



"Our nurses have been vital to the needs assessment and subsequent improvement plans because they connect clinical care with community realities," says Diane Grillo, vice president of Health Promotion, who presented the results of the needs assessment at the 2025 Regional Healthcare Symposium facilitated by the Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber. "Nurses have helped us identify needs, evaluate undeserved voices, shape plans, prioritize tactics, implement solutions and measure impact."



Community Events and Support

In 2025, RWJUH Hamilton provided 250 screenings, lectures and wellness programs led or coordinated by nurses. This included blood pressure, A1C, colorectal (lecture and take-home kits), hearing/balance (in collaboration with the Hearing and Balance Center) and memory; ostomy, bariatric, breast cancer and gynecological cancer support groups; and a broad array of wellness programs ranging from chronic disease prevention and management to practices like yoga, meditation, reiki and breathwork. New offerings included the launch of a Global Grooves program highlighting dance from different cultures and the first Fall into Wellness event providing Thanksgiving meals for local families while connecting them to screenings and social services.

RWJUH Hamilton nurses are involved in efforts to address community needs on other fronts, including participation in the Farm to Family initiative, the Community Garden at the Bromley Field & Sports Complex and various food drives and volunteer opportunities. Nurses also participated in school supply, clothing and hygiene kit drives along with holiday gift collections in 2025.

Better Health Empowers Seniors

RWJUH Hamilton held several nurse-led events as part of the Better Health Program, a free membership program for community members ages 65 and older. A Fall Health Fair gave more than 130 seniors the opportunity to speak one-on-one with RWJUH Hamilton experts, including nurses from the Emergency Department, Cancer Center, Stroke Program and Orthopedics. Participants also benefited from free health screenings and assessments given by nurses, offering insights into key wellness areas and encouraging proactive steps toward healthy aging.

In addition, more than 70 seniors learned how RWJUH Hamilton meets the needs of older community members at a Better Health Breakfast & Learn program. This event included a presentation by Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN, administrative director of the Emergency Department and ICU, on age-friendly care in the Emergency Department.

Raising Funds for Healthier Hearts

RWJUH Hamilton nurses and other team members, along with their friends and families, participated in the Central NJ Heart Walk at Mercer County Community College in October. Guided by team captain Michele Suarez, BSN, RN, their efforts helped raise funds and awareness in the fight against heart disease, including support for CPR training and lifesaving research.



Running with the Devils Partnership

With support from RWJUH Hamilton team captain Michele Suarez, BSN, RN, nurses and other team members participated in RWJBH's 9th Annual Running with the Devils 5K Run and Walk in partnership with the New Jersey Devils hockey team. The 2025 event featured more than 2,600 participants, including an RWJUH Hamilton team walk at Veteran's Park. Since the program's inception, it has raised more than \$500,000 to protect and build healthier communities.





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.

Age-Friendly Designation and NICHE Enhance Care for Older Adults

In 2025, RWJUH Hamilton achieved Age-Friendly Health Systems Level Two recognition (Committed to Care Excellence), demonstrating ongoing efforts to ensure excellence in evidence-based interventions designed to improve care for older adults. Age-Friendly Health Systems is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States. The initiative uses a 4Ms framework for essential elements of care: what matters, medication, mentation and mobility.



"I am especially proud of our nursing team who helped lead the way in attaining this recognition," says Chief Nursing Officer Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN, NEA-BC. "It reflects the vital role nurses have in supporting older adults with high-quality, person-centered care while ensuring dignity, safety and compassion."

RWJUH Hamilton's participation in the initiative complements its Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) designation, giving nurses and providers two evidence-based frameworks for exemplary eldercare. As the largest geriatric nursing program available, NICHE provides a practice model that optimizes the hospital's ability to provide evidence-based, interdisciplinary care that promotes better outcomes, positive experiences and improved care for older adults.



Recognizing Specialized NICHE Training

In 2025, RWJUH Hamilton held a ceremony to present 20 nurses and technicians with pins and certificates recognizing the completion of specialized geriatric patient education and training in support of sustaining NICHE designation:

- Four nurse leaders completed the Leadership Training Program, equipping them with skills to implement the NICHE practice model in their patient care areas.
- Ten clinical nurses completed Geriatric Resource Nurse training to serve as a clinical resource for other care team members.
- Nine patient care technicians completed Geriatric Patient Care Associate training to gain skills to provide compassionate and effective care for older adults under the guidance of nurses.

"Their dedication inspires us to continue to better address the unique needs of our older patients," says Chief Nursing Officer Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN, NEA-BC. "This includes ensuring their safety, enhancing their comfort and improving outcomes throughout the hospital."



NICHE ED Fall Prevention Initiative

RWJUH Hamilton has implemented NICHE best practices with a special focus on preventing falls. In September, the RWJUH Hamilton Emergency Department team completed a project that implemented NICHE principles to assess the impact of geriatric-focused practices such as screening, targeted risk assessments and age-sensitive interventions on falls reduction. Tactics included staff training and education, processes to expedite care, visual orientation support, a color-coded safety system, new fall prevention stretchers, auditory aids and cognitive support such as activity carts to occupy patients. The result was an overall reduction in falls between the first and fourth quarters of 2025 – including zero falls in the second quarter.

Tammy Leigh, MSN, RN, administrative director of the Emergency Department and ICU, shared the findings from this project in a presentation on “Preventing Geriatric Falls in the Emergency Department” at the New Jersey Council of Magnet Organizations, Inc. (NJCOMO) in December.



“We have about 38,000 visits in the Emergency Department each year, and about 35% of those are geriatric patients,” says Leigh. “We work diligently to ensure that we have the safest environment possible for our patient population, and it was gratifying to share our successes in implementing what we’ve learned through NICHE.”

NICHE Inpatient Mobility Outcomes

As part of inpatient NICHE efforts, the results of an RWJUH Hamilton study on the comfort level of nurses with patient mobilization informed the development of mobility boards that color code fall risk and indicate daily mobilization for each patient. Red or yellow magnetic sneakers are placed on each patient’s door to provide a visual identifier for those who need support and assistance. Once mobilization occurs and is documented, sneakers are moved to the mobility board. The initiative was piloted on Lakefront Tower 1 and then expanded to Lakefront Tower 2.

This initiative has correlated with a decrease in fall rate from 5.66 when the program began to 2.51 by end of third quarter 2025. HCAHPS scores for communication with nurses improved from 52% to 71% over this time period. In addition, discharge to rehab dropped from 5% to 3%, indicating that more patients were able to return directly to their own homes.

Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BC, administrative director of Patient Care for Medical/Surgical and Telemetry, and Katlyn Laba, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, director of Patient Care, Lakefront Tower 1 & 2, recently presented these results nationally through the NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, which facilitates NICHE.

“This initiative has demonstrated how regular movement is vital to the recovery, independence and overall health of older patients,” says Nevius. “Our goal is to get these patients back to their normal lives safely, and I’m so proud of our team for developing new strategies that make this possible.”



Reinforcing Infection Prevention Knowledge

Nurses at RWJUH Hamilton continued to focus on infection prevention throughout the year:



- 2025 marked 14 years with zero ventilator-acquired pneumonias (VAPs) at RWJUH Hamilton, a significant accomplishment that speaks to how nurses, physicians and other team members collaborate at the highest level to safeguard patients.
- Nurse educators and leaders reinforced education on the prevention of catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI), central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI) and *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff), including hands-on exercises at Skills Day, huddle discussions and chart reviews. CAUTI and CLABSI efforts also included daily floor audits, Epic chats and the continued use of chlorhexidine wipes throughout the hospital. A new initiative to share photos of central lines on the Epic chat resulted in improvements in dressing placement, and CLABSI information was incorporated into white boards for bedside shift report discussion. In addition, staff from other departments – including Interventional Radiology – completed a CLABSI education module to maximize knowledge across patient touch points.

“By the last quarter of 2025, we saw a decrease in CAUTI, CLABSI and C. diff across the board,” says Erin Glospe, MSN Ed, RN, PCCN, CIC, director of Infection Prevention and Quality. “In addition to unit-based efforts by our nurses and other team members, our Healthcare-Associated Infection Task Force meets biweekly to look for creative ways we can implement best practices.”

NWESC Improves the Workplace 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. At RWJUH Hamilton, NWESC is co-chaired by Chief Nursing Officer Dawn Hutchinson, MSN, RN, PCCN, NEA-BC, and clinical nurse Ryan Brevogel, BSN, RN.

In addition to engaging more members in 2025, NWESC focused on several new ways to improve the workplace environment. A “pebble box” initiative placed suggestion boxes on each unit so nurses could conveniently voice practical needs for quick resolution. This led to improvements such as Epic enhancements to make documentation easier and the relocation of assignment boards to a more accessible location.

To broaden meal options for night shift staff, NWESC members partnered with Food and Nutrition Services and William DiStanislao, vice president of Operations, to institute a refrigerated vending machine providing fresh foods like salads, sandwiches and snacks. The vending machine has received both high utilization and positive feedback from staff.

“NWESC provides a platform for nurses to amplify their voices, become more involved and serve as leaders for their peers – both in terms of agenda items and their positive resolution,” says Brevogel. “We welcome new members on an ongoing basis.”





Magnet Fair Engages Nurses

In December, RWJUH Hamilton held a Magnet® “Winter Wonderland” fair with games and prizes to help team members prepare for the hospital’s February site visit as part of the application process for its second Magnet® designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. More than 75 attendees engaged in holiday-themed activities to reaffirm their knowledge on a variety of performance improvement and quality topics. The event also shared information on performance improvement projects throughout the hospital, creating opportunities to adapt strategies and broaden their impact across units.

Schwartz Rounds Focus on Caregiver Compassion

RWJUH Hamilton offers Schwartz Center Rounds™ through the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, giving team members the opportunity to prioritize 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 2025, the following sessions were held at RWJUH Hamilton:

- The Prisoners Among Us: Caring for our Nephcare Patients
- Communication Across Cultures: Do You Really Understand Me?
- Alive at All Costs: The Moral Injury of a Clinician’s Worst Nightmare
- Gratitude

The events were well attended by RNs, APNs and nurse practitioners. Nurse presenters and panelists included Lakefront Tower 1 clinical nurses Kelly Eppolito, BSN, RN, and Mary Beth Ditzler, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC; ICU clinical nurses Naykis Sarvary, BSN, RN, CCRN, and Carol Schengrund, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC; and Connie Mocer, MSN, RN, AGNP-C, administrative director of Patient Care, Cardiovascular Services and Healthy Lives.

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 100 Community Hospital

RWJUH Hamilton was recognized as one of the nation's 100 Great Community Hospitals by Becker's Hospital Review, one of the fastest growing media platforms in the health care industry. Community hospitals on this list are dedicated to elevating health outcomes within the communities they serve through a commitment to clinical excellence, academic advancement and personalized, whole-person care delivery.



Top Marks for Safety

RWJUH Hamilton earned Hospital Safety Grade "A" ratings – the highest mark available – in both Spring and Fall 2025 from The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit run by employers and other large purchasers of health benefits. Developed under the guidance of a national expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses publicly available hospital safety data to assign grades to nearly 3,000 U.S. acute-care hospitals twice per year. The 2025 ratings mark the hospital's 16th and 17th Safety Grade "A" ratings, highlighting the entire team's longstanding commitment to safe, high-quality patient care.



Lowest Unplanned Hospital Visits

According to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) data, RWJUH Hamilton is ranked among hospitals with the lowest ratios of unplanned hospital visits after hospital outpatient procedures. This data attests to the team's focus on high-quality treatment, a smooth transition of care and effective education at discharge.

Excellence in Digital Innovation

In recognition of continued leadership and excellence in advancing digital health, RWJBH hospitals – including RWJUH Hamilton – were ranked as a Level 9 Acute Organization by The College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) in its 2025 Digital Health Most Wired Survey. The survey included results from more than 50,000 care providers worldwide. The Level 9 ranking reflects the dedication of the entire team, including nurses throughout the hospital, in leveraging technology to improve outcomes, efficiency and the patient experience.





Nurse Certifications Expand Expertise

RWJUH Hamilton 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, RWJUH Hamilton provides ongoing educational opportunities, resources and recognition for nursing certification.

Nurses who attained new certifications in 2025 included:

Caitlyn Barden, BSN, RN, CCRN – Critical Care Certification

Brielle Bitonti, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical Certification

Dustin Bullock, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical Certification

Stephanie Caduhada, MSN, RN, CCRN, NPD-BC – Nursing Professional Development Certification

Jennifer Chaiken, MSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC – Nursing Professional Development Certification

Kristen Crowe, RN, CMGT-BC – Nursing Case Management Certification

Sara Hibbitts, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical Certification

Melissa Kausch, BSN, RN, CV-BC – Cardiac Vascular Nursing Certification

Teresa Pachuta, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical Certification

Jennifer Perry, BSN, RN, CNOR – Perioperative Nurse Certification

Cheryl Prall, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, NPD-BC – Nursing Professional Development Certification

Timothy Ryan, MSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC – Nursing Professional Development Certification

Danielle Stimpfel, CMGT-BC – Nursing Case Management Certification

Lisette Suquilanda, BSN, RN, CV-BC – Cardiac Vascular Nursing Certification

Robert Tomossone, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical Certification

Leleah Woodson, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Medical-Surgical 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

Ryan Brevogel, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

Sarmite Catalfomo, MSN, RN, PCCN –
Telemetry North

Grace Chizek, BSN, RN – PACU

Barb DeSalvo, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Lisa Egbert, BSN, RN – Emergency Department

Michelle Fraser, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Danely Gonzalez, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2

Viridiana Gonzalez, BSN, RN – ICU

Stephen Gwiazdowski, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2

Jamie Havens, RN – Telemetry North

Anuja Jadhav, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

Melinda John-Samuel, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 2

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

Kathy Lemmon, BSN, RN – Operating Room

Stacie Mague, BSN, RN – Telemetry North

Amanda Martucci, AD, RN – ICU

Sejal Patel, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Colleen Petitt, BSN, RN –
Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

Stephanie Pownall, BSN, RN –
Cardiac Interventional Suite

Cassidy Ritter, BSN, RN – ICU

Naykis Sarvary, BSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

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

Sarah Weiss, BSN, RN – Lakefront Tower 1

Clinical Nurse Level IV

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

Sandra Barbecho, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC –
Lakefront Tower 2

Caitlyn Barden, BSN, RN – ICU

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

Feliciana Jimenez, MSN, RN, CCRN – ICU

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

Linda Palad, BSN, RN-BC – Telemetry Central

Educational Achievements

Nurses who attained new degrees in 2025 included:

Jennifer Chaiken, MSN, RN, CEN, NPD-BC

Opadere Olumide, BSN, RN

Amanda Martucci, BSN, RN

Lisette Suquilanda, BSN, RN, CV-BC



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.



Expediting Emergency Care With New Helistop

Emergency Department nurses and other team members welcomed new procedures for preparing and transferring patients experiencing certain medical emergencies with the opening of a helistop at RWJUH Hamilton. This designated landing and takeoff area for medical helicopters – including those in RWJBH's LifeFlight fleet – expands RWJUH Hamilton's ability to quickly transfer critically ill or injured patients in need of advanced, specialized or trauma care.

Complementing existing emergency care services, the helistop is available 24/7 and works in tandem with RWJUH Hamilton's Emergency Department and ground ambulance team. It can reduce a transfer to RWJUH to about 15 minutes.

"The new helistop enhances our ability to respond quickly when time makes a difference," says Chief Administrative Officer Lisa Breza, MSN, RN, NEA-BC. "The impact of this addition to our campus will be profound, saving time, saving lives and strengthening our network of care."

New Cardiac Cath Lab Streamlines and Elevates Care

In 2025, RWJUH Hamilton opened a new 5,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory offering lifesaving care and the latest technology for procedures such as percutaneous coronary intervention/angioplasty, carotid stenting, peripheral vascular interventions, loop recorder insertion and temporary pacemaker insertion. In addition to providing insight throughout the planning process, nurses and other interventional cardiology staff received training on the lab's advanced imaging tools and real-time monitoring capabilities for heart and arterial function.

Prior to the opening, cath lab cases were performed in two different areas of the hospital, with the new space convening the two labs in one central location for more efficient care delivery.

"Our team ensured that there were no interruptions in care during construction and the transition to the new cath lab – in fact, nurses even came in on their own time to help get us up and running," explains Colleen Petitt, BSN, RN, assistant director of the Cardiac Catheterization Lab and the H.H. Tuchman Cardiac Interventional Suite. "We're happy to have this impressive space and sophisticated technology available for our community."



Nurses Support New ENT Service Line

RWJUH Hamilton established a new ENT service line in 2025, with nurses receiving education on protocols, instrumentation, new technology, surgeon preferences and patient communication to assist in both adult and pediatric procedures. Daniel Schenker, BSN, RN, CNOR, nursing professional development practitioner for Surgical Services, developed training components including procedure-specific instrumentation trays for identification and an educational board with QR codes that link to ENT procedure videos. Staff in-services were provided on the StealthStation™ ENT navigation system, which uses electromagnetic technology to enable advanced surgical planning and visualization. In addition, Same Day Surgery nurses underwent Pediatric Advanced Life Support training through the American Heart Association.



“Beyond these training elements, our ENTs are committed to providing educational context as they perform the procedures,” says Kathy Lemmon, BSN, RN, Operating Room clinical coordinator. “This includes explaining the ‘why’ behind each step, giving staff a broader understanding that helps us work better as a team. It’s been exciting to witness procedures in real time with the advanced imaging we now have available.”



Novel Techniques for Bladder Cancer Treatment

With the support of nurses, RWJUH Hamilton adopted several new techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of urologic cancers. Pre-op and OR nurses received training on the pre-operative insertion of catheters and instillation of an imaging dye called Cysview® (hexaminolevulinate hydrochloride) to enable blue-light cystoscopy for enhanced bladder cancer detection. Cancer cells absorb this dye, making visualization and removal more precise during the cystoscopy procedure.

RWJUH Hamilton Same Day Surgery nurses now assist with targeted intravesical chemotherapy instillation for patients with bladder cancer. In this procedure, urologists administer mitomycin directly into the bladder through a catheter, and nurses monitor the patient during treatment, drain the bladder, remove the catheter and safely dispose of the chemotherapy agent. Training included education on specific PPE requirements for handling this medication.

“In addition to administering new workflows and monitoring patients, nurses provide education and support throughout the process,” says Daniel Schenker, BSN, RN, CNOR, nursing professional development practitioner for Surgical Services, who assisted with training for both procedures. “We’re proud to offer additional options for cancer treatment while ensuring the highest safety standards for our patients and staff.”



Lavender Project Expands to PACU

Based on positive results from a multidisciplinary study in collaboration with RWJUH Somerset on the “Effects of Lavender Aromatherapy on Pain in Total Hip and Total Knee Arthroplasty” on Lakefront Tower 1, the PACU team recreated a similar initiative to assess the effect of a lavender oil aromatherapy patch on pain and nausea for patients recovering from procedures requiring anesthesia. The study will also evaluate whether use of the lavender patch – placed on the chest area of a participating patient’s gown – leads to a reduced need for pain medication. The PACU team has started enrolling consenting patients into this study, with data analysis to be conducted in 2026.

Advanced Endoscopy and Bronchoscopy Procedures

RWJUH Hamilton welcomed an advanced endoscopist and an additional pulmonologist in 2025, expanding the ability to perform more complex cases, treat patients with higher acuity and utilize next-generation imaging and minimally invasive diagnostic platforms. Nurses and technicians received training to assist in procedures such as endoscopic ultrasounds, more complex ERCPs and endoscopic mucosal resection of polyps. In partnership with the Laboratory, nurses expanded their pulmonology specimen collection capabilities to ensure accurate collection, documentation and results. Pre-Admission

Testing nurses provide valuable pre-operative patient education, and nurses follow ERAS (Enhanced Recovery After Surgery) protocols following patient procedures.

“Patients benefit from the opportunity to undergo minimally invasive procedures in place of traditional surgery thanks to our new technology and expanded expertise,” says Heather Nolan, BSN, RN, director of Perianesthesia Services. “Patient safety and quality is our primary focus, from specimen handling to the post-procedure education that optimizes recovery.”



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“Perioperative services achieved many advances in 2025, and nurse involvement is the foundation of every meaningful improvement we make in patient care,” says Jennifer Borg, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CNOR, administrative director for Surgical Services. “Our front-line nurses are very involved in decision-making, as they’re always looking for the very best options for our patients.”

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Nursing Research Highlighted at Quality Fairs

At RWJUH Hamilton's annual Quality Fair in April, nurses showcased their knowledge and commitment to the advancement of evidence-based care through the following research projects.

Clear Communication: Enhancing Patient Understanding of their Medications

Lisa Nevius, MSN, RN, OCN, NEA-BC; Nancy Baeza, BSN, RN-BC

Through consistent medication education at each patient interaction and utilization of validation tools such as teach-back and real-time coaching, this study showed a 42% improvement in the HCAHPS domain score for communication about medication in 2024 compared to the 2023 baseline.

Comfort Level of Nurses with Patient Mobilization in a Community Hospital Setting

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

In a study aimed at improving outcomes for patients ages 65 and older, nurses and rehabilitation staff assessed comfort level and pinpointed gaps in knowledge and perceived skills in patient mobilization among nurses and patient care technicians. Results were used to develop educational plans and inform a mobility program on Medical-Surgical and Telemetry units.

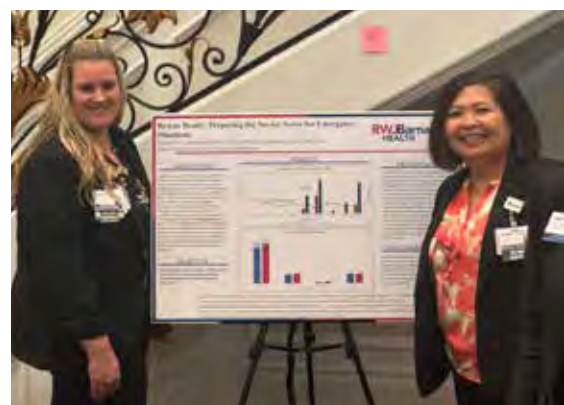
This study was also selected for a poster presentation at the RWJBH 16th Annual Quality and Patient Safety Forum.

Rescue Ready: Preparing the Novice Nurse for Emergency Situations

Stephanie Caduhada, MSN, RN, CCRN, NPD-BC;
Naomi Hurley, BSN, RN, CCRN

To increase nurses' confidence and critical skills in managing deteriorating patients, simulation education was provided by nursing educators and respiratory therapists based on real-life rapid response team scenarios. A significant increase in post-training comfort and confidence was noted, along with an increase in RRT calls and a decreasing trend in overall mortality. Future trainings are being planned in alignment with data analysis.

This study was also selected for a poster presentation at the RWJBH 16th Annual Quality and Patient Safety Forum.



Peripheral Neurovascular Checks: Standardizing Excellence in Postoperative Monitoring

Jennifer Borg, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CNOR; Casey Schade, BSN;
Denise Berdecia, MSN, RN, ONC

Through the development of a structured protocol with timed intervals for peripheral neurovascular checks (PNVCs) and training/education of nurses, this study demonstrated an improvement in PNVC compliance for patients undergoing total hip, total knee and orthopedic spine surgeries.

Improving the Press Ganey's CAHPS Experience Score for "RNs Kept You Informed" by Completing Daily Family Updates on the Telemetry North Unit

Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN; Jenna McLaughlin, RN; Ryan Brevogal, BSN, RN; Jamie Havens, RN;
Stacie Mague, BSN, RN; Sarmite Catalfomo, MSN, RN, PCCN; Gina Mastroianni;
Allyson Sullivan; Taschica Williams

Following the institution of a multifaceted plan created to ensure that patients' families understand the plan of care, medications and support resources, this study showed that the CAHPS Top Box score for "RNs kept me informed" increased from 67.29% to 90.91% and from the 37th percentile rank to the 95th percentile rank nationally.

This study was also selected for a podium presentation at the RWJBH 16th Annual Quality and Patient Safety Forum.

Preventing Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infection Through Chlorhexidine Gluconate Utilizations

Ceara Phillips, BSN, RN

To improve patient safety, Telemetry North revitalized action items that help prevent CAUTIs. Efforts included conducting a literature review on CAUTI prevention and collaborating with Infection Control to revise and implement the CAUTI audit tool. Staff in all units received enhanced training and education. Based on the literature, the team focused in particular on instituting chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) baths for all patients with Foley catheters. In addition, the CAUTI audit tool was implemented system-wide through Huron rounding. As a result of these efforts, the Telemetry North unit was able to implement CHG baths for all patients with urinary catheters and achieve a zero CAUTI rate in 2024.









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