



Atlantic Health System

2020 Nursing Annual Report

YEAR OF THE NURSE
2020  2021
EXCEL • LEAD • INNOVATE

Message from System CEO

Brian Gragnolati

President & CEO
Atlantic Health System

I am pleased to share Atlantic Health System's first-ever Nursing Annual Report.

In the pages that follow, we highlight the talent, dedication and accomplishments of our nursing team, whose daily work to deliver the highest quality, compassionate care advances our mission to build healthier communities.

In an organization like Atlantic Health System, recognized nationwide for clinical excellence and an outstanding workplace culture, no one plays a bigger role in delivering on our promises than our nurses.

Since March 2020, these amazing caregivers have provided all of us in health care and around the globe with an unparalleled example of strength, commitment and living with purpose. Time and again throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the expertise, ingenuity and resilience of our nurses has meant the difference between life and death and sent loved ones home to their families against incredible odds.

It is an honor to work alongside the Atlantic Health System Nursing Team to provide the highest standard of care and concern for our patients. I am confident you will enjoy learning more about their achievements, and I encourage you to share this report with your family and colleagues, to shine a light on these heartwarming stories of people who have devoted their lives to caring for others.

Brian Gragnolati
President and CEO
Atlantic Health System



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A Message from the System CNE

Trish O’Keefe, PhD, RN

While the year 2020 was originally declared the International Year of the Nurse by the World Health Organization, it soon became clear that it would be remembered as the year of COVID-19 and how nurses triumphed in so many ways.

Without question, our Atlantic Health System nurses were integral in our response to this global health crisis. In fact, the remarkable contributions of our nurses were more critical and more visible than ever.

In these pages, we are proud to highlight our nurses’ accomplishments, while also illustrating the dedication, innovation and the resilience of our nurse professionals across Atlantic Health System.

We celebrate their unwavering pursuit of clinical excellence and professional development, as they collaborated and shared best practices throughout the year. Our nurses were essential in educating and serving the public, and were celebrated for being heroic role models, and for demonstrating a calm, professional and selfless spirit.

Our nurses are key leaders within our organization and foundational to our culture of quality and innovation. They provide compassionate, extraordinary care while, at the same time, demonstrating great courage and strength. We are proud that even during the COVID-19 crisis, two of our medical centers achieved Magnet® recognition from the American Nurses Credentialing Center – one of the highest honors in nursing and a true testament to our steadfast commitment to advancing our nursing practice.

I am honored and privileged to lead this incredible team of nurses who have dedicated their lives to caring for our patients and our community. This report is for all of them. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Trish O’Keefe, PhD, RN

Chief Nurse Executive, Atlantic Health System

Senior Vice President, Atlantic Health System

President, Morristown Medical Center



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Chief Nurse Executive,
Atlantic Health System

Senior Vice President,
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President,
Morristown Medical Center

About Us

At its peak, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic tremendously impacted the lives of our patients, their families, the surrounding communities and our own nursing team. Certainly, the physical and psychological toll are, by now, well described. The unique stressors upon our staff have been attributed to increased concerns about the transmission of the virus, extremely high levels of patient acuity, redeployment of nurses to new and unfamiliar practice settings, isolation from one's own family and their usual sources of support, and coping with exhaustion and fatigue. All said, the COVID-19 pandemic and the year 2020, proved to be the most difficult and challenging year of our collective careers. Yet, support for our caregivers has always been, and continues to be, the very highest priority at Atlantic Health System and the overarching goal of all our organization's efforts.

Our nurses worked tirelessly to provide care for all stages of patient needs, and Atlantic Health System emergently organized efforts to promote and safeguard the safety, physical and emotional well-being of all our team members. Administrative and clinical leaders prioritized basic daily needs, including food, housing, communication and well-being services. We knew, for example, that nurses needed to feel safe and cared for, and that we valued them as human beings first, and health care professionals, second. Toward that end, availability of Atlantic Health System resources ensured that the personal

safety and health of our nurses translated into safe and efficient quality of patient care at the front lines of the pandemic in every one of our sites of care.



Communication Is Key to Our Success

At the beginning, when public information about COVID-19 was scarce and varied widely depending upon the source, Atlantic Health System immediately instituted webinars and meetings with our own panels of infectious disease experts who provided



factual baseline knowledge, imparted evidence-based practice guidance and responded to concerns about this new and lethal virus. Sessions were provided system-wide, and were available via Grand Rounds, Workplace for Facebook, huddles, staff meetings and many other forums. Command Centers were also established, in order to provide structure and orchestration of the details in all our emergency efforts.

At the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first of many Atlantic Health System electronic “Situation Reports” were initiated, to provide state-wide COVID-19 transmission and occurrence data, and communicate the current COVID-19 census within all Atlantic

Health System hospitals, the number of patients who transitioned to recovery, and all relevant operational information. In addition, all chief nursing officers (CNOs) convened nursing leadership in management huddles three to four times per day, seven days a week in order to convey status updates about patient care needs, inclusive of staffing, education needs and demand for supplies. Enhanced daily leadership huddles placed a high focus upon the needs of our nurses and their ability to continue to provide the highest level of quality care. Electronic and posted bulletins helped to inform, when the frequency of new information seemed to occur very rapidly. Virtual team member forums were held on all shifts, and in-person, so that the organization’s leaders could personally enhance the daily rounding practices that took place in all the clinical and support areas.

Meeting Basic Needs of Our Nurses

Through frequent touchpoints, Atlantic Health System determined that the major concerns of our nurses were safety, access to food, a place to shelter when separation from families was necessary, and time off for restful rejuvenation. Through the generous outpouring from local community organizations and restaurants, meals were provided to every single care site, numerous times throughout the week, so much so that leaders designated a coordinator to distribute the contributions in an organized and equitable manner so that all nurses truly felt the support. In addition, hospital cafeterias were transformed into mini-groceries, so that necessities were readily available, and no one had to stop at their local supermarkets and compete for items that were very scarce on store shelves. Arrangements by Atlantic Health System were made with area hotels, so that nurses had a place to stay when they needed to isolate from vulnerable loved ones at home, and scrubs and

About Us (cont'd.)

shoes were donated and available, making it possible to change from work clothing safely and comfortably. Nurses identified managerial support as a very critical resource, receiving support and scheduling flexibility whenever feasible. As many team members were also coping with young children who were being home schooled, and most day care centers were closed, hospital schedule changes had to accommodate working parents' rapidly changing needs especially when both parents were deemed essential workers, and very much needed in their respective workplaces.

Incredible Team Effort

As the COVID-19 pandemic surged, Atlantic Health System facilities, maintenance and plant engineering departments swiftly orchestrated their expertise to build negative pressure rooms and trailers, seemingly



overnight. By keeping close communication with nursing and hospital leadership and based upon the acuity and overall census of patients diagnosed with COVID-19, Facilities and maintenance personnel obtained supplies, repurposed their workforces and made it possible for inpatient units to transform into acuity adjustable environments of care. While massive shortages of supplies, devices and equipment were the norm for many acute care hospitals in the surrounding region, this did not become the issue at Atlantic Health System. Our leaders represented Atlantic Health System at the highest-level emergency health care strategy sessions in the Tri-State Area setting. As a result, procurement of all necessary supplies as well as temporary agency personnel and locum tenens reached the Atlantic Health System point-of-care in every single patient care setting. During the period of time between the first and second surges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Atlantic Health System leaders ensured the voice of nursing when it organized clinical and support teams to create "COVID-19 Playbooks." The Playbooks consider the uniqueness of each site, yet resources of every imaginable category are organized and prioritized



for immediate activation, in the event of another complex global, national or regional emergency.

Emotional Well-Being: Coping and Its Aftermath

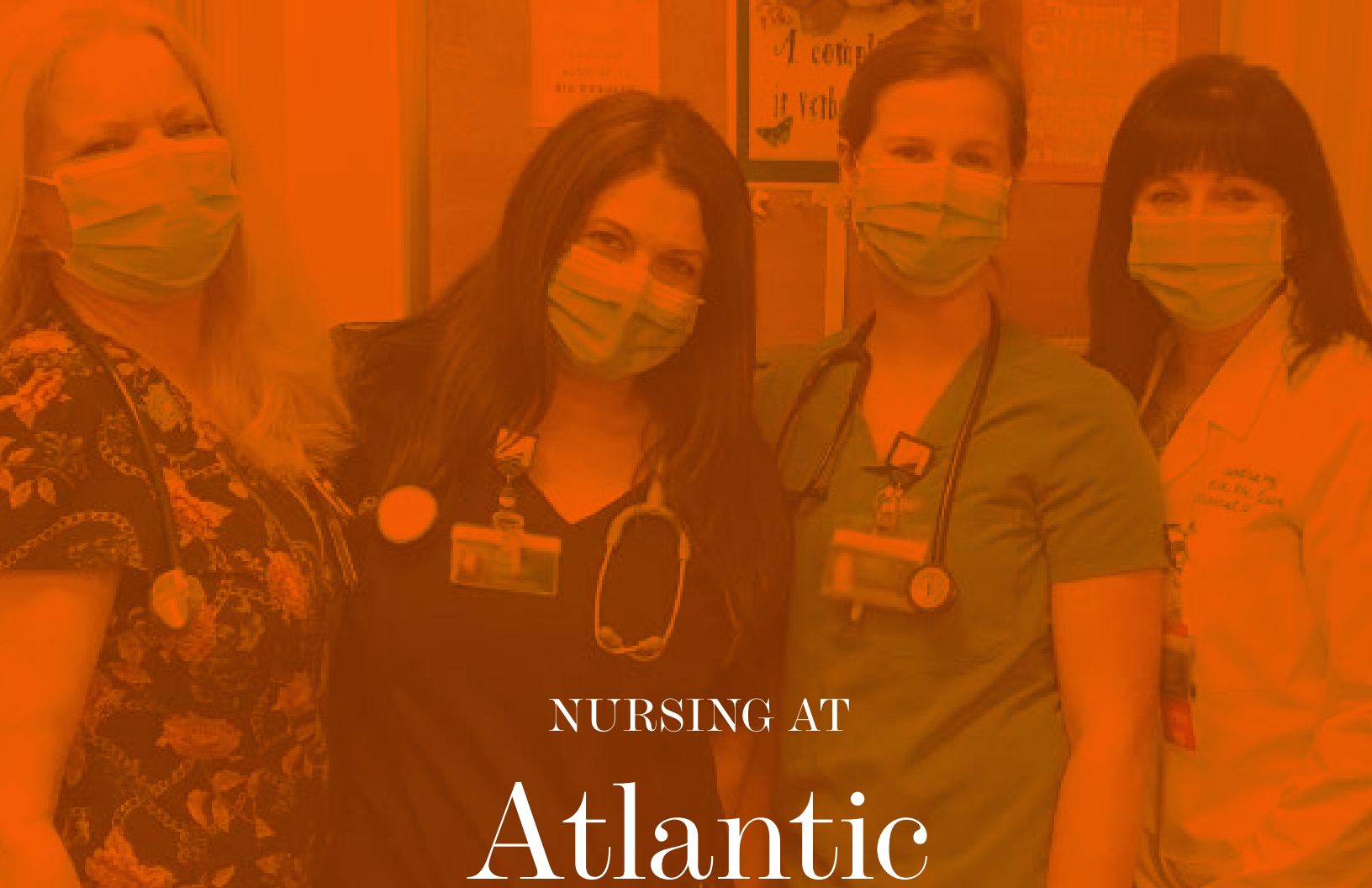
The full spectrum of psychosocial support offered by Atlantic Health System has been crucial to nursing's survival and journey to resiliency. During the era of complete lockdowns, community shortages, limited personal contact and the ever-present danger of loved ones' health and welfare, no one deserved our full focus more than the front-line clinical nurses and the staff who supported them on a daily basis. As a result, CONCERN (our EAP) provided a vast array of virtual and telephonic programs, including an emotional support hotline, confidential therapy sessions, department stress support groups and huddles, Skype meetings, free apps for all staff, the CONCERN Workplace page for daily inspiration, mindfulness and well-being tips, audio meditations, poetry videos and writing workshops, webinars and many more informational and therapeutic modalities.

Recognition of nurses' efforts is a continuous objective of Atlantic Health System, and DAISY and Petal Awards, and "Shout-Outs" on Workplace, are only a few examples. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pandemic Emergency Pay (PEP) was created, a form of hazard pay, to help recognize and compensate team members in specific roles in the form of an additional pay differential for all worked hours. Celebrations in the forms of special concerts, arrangements with local community groups for parades and drive-bys, distribution of "Thank a Health Care Hero" lawn signs to bring home, frequent messages by our Atlantic Health System President and CEO Brian Gragnolati and the leadership at each site that are in-person, on our



intranet and public website—all served to communicate heartfelt gratitude for our entire nursing team.

At Atlantic Health System, we invest in and are deeply committed to our passionate and dedicated nurses. They provided skillful and thoroughly compassionate care during a grim, unprecedented chapter in our nation's history. Through frequent feedback, such as in "Pulse Survey" electronic opinion surveys and regular in-person rounding practices, we are always striving to improve the care we provide to our health care heroes, so that they, in turn, can provide expert care for our communities. We are humbled and grateful that our unwavering support for our nurses translated into the outstanding, heroic and compassionate care our patients and families received during COVID-19 and well beyond.



NURSING AT

Atlantic Medical Group



Year in Review

Caring at Its Best in the Community Setting

Patients of all ages who require ambulatory care in the community receive treatment and compassionate care close to home, in any one or more of primary care medicine and specialty practices, such as cardiology, neurology, oncology, etc. Patients may be transitioning from the acute care, inpatient setting, from subacute facilities and/or directly from the home, and our expert team of nurses provide the transition of care they need and the follow-up visits required to get them on their way to wellness. Atlantic Medical Group's (AMG's) ambulatory care nurses become their partners in care, providing follow-up calls and reminders, as well as education and a compassionate, listening ear when needed.

Throughout it all, the registered nurses, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses, office managers and clinical coordinators demonstrated commitment, teamwork, resiliency and flexibility.

- > Following CDC and NJDOH guidance, AMG's clinical leadership provided screening tools for patients and team members, provided infection prevention education and supported the pivot to virtual visits/telemedicine, all to safely support our patients and communities, care for ill patients and prevent the spread of COVID-19. In 2020, despite COVID-19, there were 1.197 million patient care visits and 288,733 telemedicine visits.

A significant number of patients with COVID-19 suffer with persistent symptoms, the "long haulers," that may include fatigue, weakness, breathlessness, tachycardia, anxiety, depression and other symptoms. To meet their needs, the Atlantic COVID Recovery Center was established and went live in the last quarter of 2020.

- > Its goal is to provide programmatic, holistic, patient-centered, coordinated and integrated multispecialty and interdisciplinary care for patients who have symptoms persisting for longer than 30 days after their confirmed or suspected COVID-19 illness. Specialties and disciplines include pulmonary, cardiology, neurology, rehabilitation medicine, behavioral health, and primary care.

In response to the needs of a very underserved population, Goryeb



Role and Response of Ambulatory Care

**Inger Donohue,
MSN, RN, CPHQ**

Director, Quality & Clinical Services
Atlantic Medical Group

Caring for our patients in the best way possible during the COVID-19 pandemic was front and center for most of 2020. Atlantic Medical Group (AMG) gathered and synthesized all the often-conflicting information disseminated by a broad number of national, state and local regulatory agencies. We quickly realized that frequent and transparent communication was the key to keeping everyone informed on the emerging COVID-19 landscape. Such a strategy also helped to combat the daily barrage of media misinformation, as staff and patients often relied upon the wisdom, knowledge and expertise that our own system and AMG leadership provided.

In the ambulatory care environment, COVID-19 precipitated many changes, and AMG displayed "outside the box," innovative thinking in so many ways, all aimed at keeping our patients and our team members safe. AMG nurses were and are integral to the many successes we experienced, and also celebrated, in 2020. Our AMG mission, to deliver high-quality, exceptional care, and to recognize the unique needs of all those we serve, is truly "lived" by our nurses and team members each and every day.

AMG nurses prove over and over that the confidence our patients place in us is well deserved, and that the extraordinary care we provide is so deeply appreciated by the members of our surrounding communities. Thank you all for the care and dedication you bring to our patients and their families, and for the caring and respectful way you collaborate with all our outstanding AMG team members. I am so proud to be part of our great profession and part of this great AMG team.

Atlantic Medical Group (cont'd.)

Reflections from an AMG Practice Nurse — Innovation, Compassion and a Shared Mission **Ashley Lange, BSN, RN**

Practice Manager III
Internal Medicine Faculty Associates

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably accentuated the essential role of the registered professional nurse. Aside from directly caring for patients, nurses quickly adapted to serve in whatever capacity that was necessary. We became infection prevention specialists, navigating through changing types of PPE availability and disinfectants caused by worldwide shortages. We became IT specialists, adopting new digital health care delivery workflows to safely assess our patients, albeit remotely. We offered emotional support to those in need while, at the same time, trying to control our own anxieties. We became public health educators not only to serve our patients, but to become vital sources of truth to our own loved ones and each other. Although we were thanked countless times and even referred to as “angels” and “heroes” by the patients who were the most vulnerable, ultimately, we were humbled by our experiences and gained a greater appreciation for how precious life truly is. Furthermore, our sense of gratitude deepened, knowing we are privileged to care for others, and we also had jobs that afforded us economic stability in a time of great uncertainty.

Learning entirely new ways to deliver care, supporting our own colleagues with their illnesses, and, yes, battling our own inner fears and stressors, we have prevailed through it all. While I would be remiss not to mention the level of exhaustion experienced by many, it is the outpouring of gratitude from our patients that keeps us going. These “unprecedented times” are not over yet, but we will continue to recognize that we have gotten through this pandemic, as a team, together.

Children’s Transgender Health program created a “Passion Project” for transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth and their families.

- > Advanced Practice Nurses provide education and support to families and providers, and advocate for this most vulnerable group within our medical practices, our hospital system and the community-at-large. “The Passion Project was founded during the COVID-19 pandemic to share what we love with others. Whether it’s just putting a smile on someone’s face or learning a hard-earned skill, The Passion Project serves as a platform for K-12 grade innovators around the world to come together and share what they love doing. Our mission is to inspire students of all ages to pursue their passion and make a difference in the world.” See The Passion Project (passion-project.org).

The goal for the AMG Ambulatory Palliative Care Program is to improve quality of life and provide relief from daily symptoms and stress, for both the patient and the family.

- > This extra layer of support is appropriate for any age and at any stage of illness, and it can be provided along with disease-directed treatment. The program expanded in 2020, to provide services in the Overlook Medical Center and Morristown Medical Center regions.

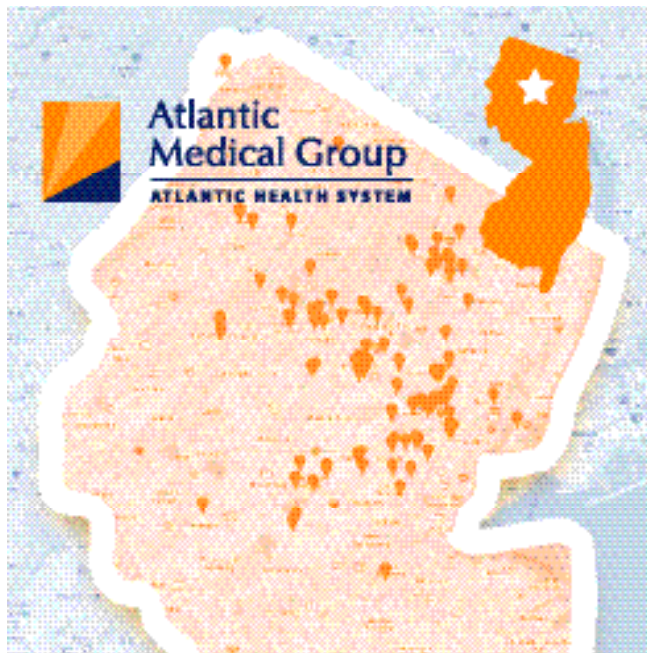
AMG RNs were deployed to the “Community COVID-19 Hotline.” During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in our region, from March through May 2020, the COVID-19 Hotline received upwards of 10,000 phone calls; 80% of which were triaged to the appropriate level of care.

- > Physicians and teams of nurses were available seven days a week to counsel and direct patients, as well as other callers to either a virtual telehealth visit, or based on symptoms, recommend Emergency Department treatment as necessary. All callers welcomed the opportunity to talk through their concerns and have their fears allayed. The hotline was open to everyone in the community, and the calls were as varied as our communities.





AMG Nursing by the Numbers



AMG at a Glance 2020





NURSING AT

Atlantic
Visiting
Nurse

Year in Review

Major Strides in Reducing Readmissions

- > Reduction in Unplanned Rehospitalizations (Home Care): One of the initiatives most at the forefront of our Home Care department is the reduction of unplanned rehospitalizations. Over the past year, we have developed a process to identify high-risk patients at the start of care in order to prioritize elements of our protocol: Focus on “front loading” of clinical care, meaning that we provide a higher concentration of services within the first two weeks, making sure patients visit their physician/



PPE Assembly



Embracing Innovation to Care for Our Community

Mary Pradilla, RN, MS

Executive Director
Atlantic Visiting Nurse

I am deeply grateful to lead over 175 home care and hospice nurses who provide the highest quality care to our homebound patients. 2020 was an especially challenging year for our team, and the dedication and resiliency of our nurses was very apparent. Daily, I saw our team deliver compassionate care during the COVID-19 pandemic and well beyond.

The year 2020 began at Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) by merging with another home care and hospice agency, and we successfully integrated 125 new employees into the AVN team. In March, our combined staff managed patients when the pandemic's impact reached its highest levels in our region. At first, patients were understandably reluctant to allow clinicians into their homes; yet, armed in full PPE garb, AVN nurses conducted a multitude of home visits when many other post-acute agencies and providers were offering solely the virtual option. The AVN team demonstrated agility by creating a mechanism to provide virtual visits to augment face-to-face care. Now, our telehealth team selectively provides daily telemonitoring for the sickest patients. Our AVN team was redeployed to occupational medicine, local subacute facilities, and to our own acute care hospitals.

During this unprecedented year, AVN celebrated the unparalleled successes of our nursing team, as evidenced by the numerous Clinical Excellence and Professional Advancement Career Track (PACT) awards that honored our nurses who demonstrated excellence in patient care, customer service, mentorship, innovation, and education. I am very proud of the accomplishments of our outstanding nurses. Their contributions to our patients, community and Atlantic Health System is without equal. I am thankful for every member of our team and grateful for their daily commitment to our organization's success.

Atlantic Visiting Nurse (cont'd.)

Reflections Upon the Year 2020: COVID-19 Impact on Atlantic Visiting Nurse

Stephanie Hill, MS, RN, CWOCN

Manager Quality, Education, Wound Program and Infection Prevention

When COVID-19 began to impact our service area, our census plummeted because patients were subject to the state's stay-at-home mandate and were afraid of inviting visiting nursing staff into their zone of safety, their homes. Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) provided virtual visits and monitoring for patients who were diagnosed with COVID-19, through Advanced Care at Home. Additionally, we collaborated with the Transitions of Care staff and physicians so that patients would be closely monitored and to achieve improved clinical outcomes. AVN staff were called upon to screen residents and provide support to staff at a neighboring continuing care community and an assisted living facility. AVN actively participated in the Observation at Home program for patients with COVID-19 who reside in the community. In order to continue to provide the level of care required by this complex patient population, we increased the availability of virtual visits to supplement in-person visits, and we expanded the use of telehealth to include hospice on-call, chaplaincy, social work, and appropriate nursing visits. This required in-depth training of patients on the use of technology, such as the use of cellphones for FaceTime or Zoom visits. In this way, our staff were able to perform patient assessments and provide education in a more personalized format.

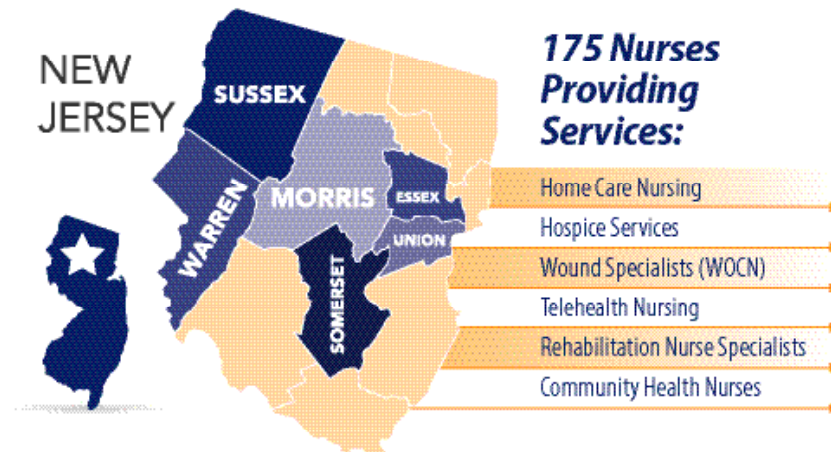
A patient commented: "In those days of beginning to deal with the coronavirus, I always felt that the AVN staff were exceptionally attuned to taking the best possible care of me as their patient, protecting their own health, and taking great care to leave here safely and securely – ready to see their next patient. High praise to all for a job well done."

provider within seven days of hospital discharge, enrolling in the Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) program, and contacting the patients twice daily, in the first 10 days of service. This high-focus outreach is in addition to the actual visits, to make sure that the patient's condition is stabilizing as anticipated. The assistant managers also speak to the in-hospital liaisons weekly, to make sure that all necessary interventions have been considered. Additionally, we have been working with the Palliative Care and Case Management Departments in the hospitals in order to appropriately discharge patients to the correct level of care with the safest possible discharge plan. We ended 2020 with a readmission rate of 13.1% compared to 15.2% nationally.


Technology and Collaboration

- > Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) Home Care and Hospice collaborated to create each patient's individualized care plan. AVN nurses expanded their knowledge to use technology during the COVID-19 pandemic to collaborate with other providers. During a home visit, a nurse assessed that the patient was in distress but did not wish to go the hospital. The nurse used her cell phone so that the physician could assess the patient virtually and provide the interventions needed. Due to the age of our population and medical conditions, they are not always able to utilize available technology. However, when possible we engaged available family caregivers to assist and support communication with health care providers.

Atlantic Visiting Nurse at a Glance



dedicated spiritual loved one **advocate** prepared **kind** teamwork dependable **respectful**
contributing **wellness** degree **accepting**
comforter **making a difference**
rights **RN** helper **loving** accountable **integrity**
training ethical **new skills** strength **giving** tireless emergency visit
commitment **birth** **giving** pandemic **patience**
advance care **giving** extraordinary caring **service**
outpatient visit diverse **family** **excel.** **lead** **service**
purpose **nursing** communication **educator**
professional challenge **innovate** understanding **leadership**
COVID-19 **innovate** level of care **leadership**
continuing education **support** **listener** patient care
holistic licensed **learners** **caring** new knowledge
focus survive **community**
visiting nurse **selfless**
positivity science **healers** recover **hope** **humility**
endurance **heart** resilient **responder**
critical thinking **heart** **high quality care**
empathy virtual visit **high quality care**

A nurse in a white uniform and mask is shown from the chest up, looking at a computer monitor. The background is a blurred clinical setting with medical equipment. The entire image has a strong orange color cast.

NURSING AT
**Chilton
Medical
Center**

Year in Review

The year 2020 started with a positive Triennial Joint Commission Accreditation in early January.

During the first quarter of 2020, we partnered with several academic collegiate universities to be a clinical site for advanced practice nurses and physician assistants in surgery, pediatrics, behavioral health, medicine, and various outpatient settings.

Chilton Medical Center continued our relationship with Pequannock High School to support a health care science, technology,



Magnet® Nursing in Unprecedented Times

Maureen A. Schneider, PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, CPHQ, FACHE

Chief Nursing & Operations Officer

From delivering high-quality, evidence-based care to patients and families, I am so proud of our outstanding nursing team. Certainly, nursing's dedication to the best clinical quality outcomes was never more tested than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community hospital expertly cared for the most acutely ill patients, in areas and settings that would have been unfathomable more than a year ago. Through it all, our nursing team emerged confident in their strength, talents, and expertise, exemplifying the very best of our profession. Staff remained strong and connected to our patients and their families, through touch and through technology – all of which promoted nurturing and ignited the spirit of caring.

This year was noteworthy for many reasons, and our inaugural American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet® recognition for our hard-earned commitment to outstanding nursing excellence and quality outcomes is no exception. We received three exemplars and look forward to accepting the recognition during the upcoming National Magnet® Conference in Atlanta, Georgia!

Other important accomplishments include contributing to the professional literature, providing numerous educational programs for staff, celebrating our outstanding nursing team, expanding upon our career ladder program, PACT, as evidenced by numerous projects in quality, safety, professional practice, wellness and family-centered care.

I am humbled, thankful and inspired by all of the members of our nursing leadership and nursing team and express my deep appreciation in improving the lives of fellow team members, patients, and families. I salute you and am so very proud of each one of you! Thank you for all you have done!!!

Chilton Medical Center (cont'd.)

Reflections Upon the Year 2020: Innovations Thrive in the Face of a Pandemic

**Laura Reilly, MSN, RN,
CCRN-K, CNRN**

Director of Nursing

The year 2020 was challenging as we faced the uncertainties of the COVID-19 crisis with strength, resilience, teamwork, and innovation. We created a unique approach to delivering high-quality care by developing “just-in-time” learning for nurses and the support team. Transforming nursing teams to meet the needs of high acuity patients included transitioning the Mother-Baby unit to a Medical-Surgical unit, Medical-Surgical units to Intermediate Care, Intermediate Care to ICU, and finally, even creating an ICU in the PACU.

We met the high demands to oxygenate our patients with high-flow oxygen, utilizing twice the number of ventilators normally used and dedicating and implementing prone positioning teams. Bispectral index (BIS) monitors were used for mechanically ventilated patients who required paralytics in order to be oxygenated. We developed “grab-and-go” rapid sequence intubation and Code Blue medication bags to allow the teams to enter the isolation rooms quickly when emergency patient care was required.

Nurses were trained to use powered air-purifying respirators (PAPRs) and “donner and doffer” observers helped keep each other safe. Bundling-of-care guidelines were quickly created, UV light sterilization extended the life of our N95 masks and HEPA filters were installed in all rooms. The Family-In-Touch Program was developed so we could keep patients’ families informed. Handheld devices easily connected patients and families through virtual calls.

Throughout the entire pandemic, Chilton Medical Center nurses, leadership, and ancillary departments worked as a team to ensure we could meet the needs of our patients and their families in the ongoing crisis. Each day, our team members felt overwhelmed and exhausted, but our support for one another helped us find the strength to meet patients’ needs and excel in this time of crisis.

engineering and mathematics (STEM) program for senior students. The program was highly successful, and the Chilton Medical Center health care team grew tremendously to 70 students.

Several of our nurse leaders were appointed board members to the Organization of Nurse Leaders – NJ, and another was elected to the Board of Education in Jefferson Township, NJ.

On March 9th, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet® appraisers arrived to conduct the third phase of our application process and were very impressed when they met nearly 100 team members, and were greeted with a red carpet and received a standing ovation. The energy was palpable as Chilton Medical Center nurses shared their stories with the appraisers, showcasing their high level of dedication, professionalism, and excellence. Nursing truly shone, as did our entire organization. Nursing demonstrated our evidenced-based quality care integrating our Shared Governance Professional Practice Model “Safe Passage of Caring” and Jean Watson theory-based nursing. Our high performance standards were apparent to the Magnet® appraisers as they met with several of our interdisciplinary teams and conducted interviews with nurses, physicians, leadership, board members and other team members, and learned about the great work accomplished at Chilton Medical Center.

On that same day of the Magnet® site visit, Chilton Medical Center also admitted its first patient with COVID-19.

None of us were prepared for what would come next. Within a short three weeks, Chilton Medical Center’s census went from one patient with COVID-19 to nearly 80 patients, peaking at 109.

Many programs were emergently halted to meet the needs of a growing patient population with COVID-19, the majority, critically ill. Emergent onboarding of locum tenens physicians, advanced practice nurses, and agency nurses was crucial to recruit the clinical care, who were urgently needed. Health care workers from across the



country came to assist as we were one of the first, fast and hardest-hit hospitals in the state and the country. A health care team of four individuals developed and utilized a COVID-19 Deterioration Report twice a day. This report was distributed to the clinical teams to support clinical decision-making, prioritization of care, and ensured focused resources to those who needed it most. This resulted in a publication by one of our Nurse Practitioners. The Chilton Medical Center team was heartened when we heard the song "Here Comes the Sun" playing over the speakers whenever a patient with COVID-19 was extubated, knowing our hard work made a difference! We were overjoyed to "clap out" to the song "Walking on Sunshine" every time a patient with COVID-19 was successfully discharged. The team quickly learned to create and develop a COVID-19 Playbook as we prepared for a second wave in the fall.



Through all this chaos and uncertainty, Chilton Medical Center also was able to achieve several accolades such as our ANCC Magnet® recognition, Leapfrog Score of "A" and several Healthgrades awards. 2020 will be remembered at Chilton Medical Center as a time when the health care heroes did the unthinkable during unprecedented times and did it with courage, resolve, passion, compassion and innovative ideas, and were always truly selfless and professionals!!





NURSING AT

Morristown
Medical
Center

Year in Review

- > The Valerie Fund Children’s Center opened a brand-new center in June 2020. The Valerie Fund Children’s Center provides outpatient care to pediatric hematology and oncology patients. The new space provides private isolation rooms, a much larger procedure room and a child life activity room.
- > The Pediatric areas developed the COVID-19 Standards of Care and an Atlantic Health System Pediatric Stroke Protocol.
- > Palliative Care Nursing and Medical Collaboration Recipient of American Hospital Association’s 2020 Circle of Life Citation of Honor - awarded to the Nancy & Skippy Weinstein Inpatient Hospice and Palliative Care Center for innovation in palliative care.
- > Established temporary off-site inpatient palliative care unit for Morristown Medical Center patients with COVID-19 at Mount Kemble site.



Professionalism and Grace During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Carol Jones, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Chief Nursing Officer

I am proud to share our ongoing commitment to nursing excellence, which, along with our shared values of professionalism, respect, involvement and dignity, is an integral part of our culture.

Nursing has changed drastically since we opened our doors over 125 years ago. Today, we use evidence-based practice and research to not only ensure that our patients receive the best possible care; we are very much “influencers,” on the cutting edge of advancements in nursing, medicine, and health care. Our nurses make an incredible contribution to the patient experience as advocates, educators, and collaborators in caring.

To ensure that we build upon these achievements, Morristown Medical Center launched the Center for Nursing Innovation and Research (CNIR), where nurses creatively solve problems related to patient care. We also recruit and retain the highest quality nursing professionals and create a pathway for their development and advancement. As a result, our nurses are motivated and inspired to advance their profession through national certifications and professional educational endeavors.

This past year has been a challenging one, and one that most definitely showcased the talent, flexibility and resilience of our outstanding nursing staff. Words cannot express my gratitude for the professionalism and grace displayed during these unprecedented times. Every day there were different challenges to resolve and we collaborated to help achieve and exceed our usual level of excellence. I hope you enjoy this report highlighting the efforts of our team at Morristown Medical Center, as well as the other sites that make up what we know is an amazing health care organization.

Morristown Medical Center (cont'd.)

Reflections Upon the Year 2020:

End-of-Life Nursing During COVID-19

Jacqueline A. Tierney, MSN, RN, CHPN

Hospice and Palliative Care, Simon 3

I am a hospice and palliative care nurse on Simon 3. My calling is to comfort patients at the end of life, along with their families, and allow for a peaceful and dignified death. During the height of the crisis, I aided in the opening of an off-site palliative care unit at Mt. Kemble for patients throughout the entire system who were diagnosed with COVID-19 and required end-of-life care; helped secure staff who had been displaced from their usual practice areas, and communicated their new assignments; determined training needs, coordinated schedules, and ensured they understood their daily responsibilities. Staff were trained on donning PPE, charting in Epic, managing IV pumps, administering comfort medications, and practicing the skill of communicating with patients and families.

As a practicing hospice nurse, the most difficult component of this was not being able to provide physical touch and comfort to patients and their families. As a result, we developed innovative ways to provide necessary support.

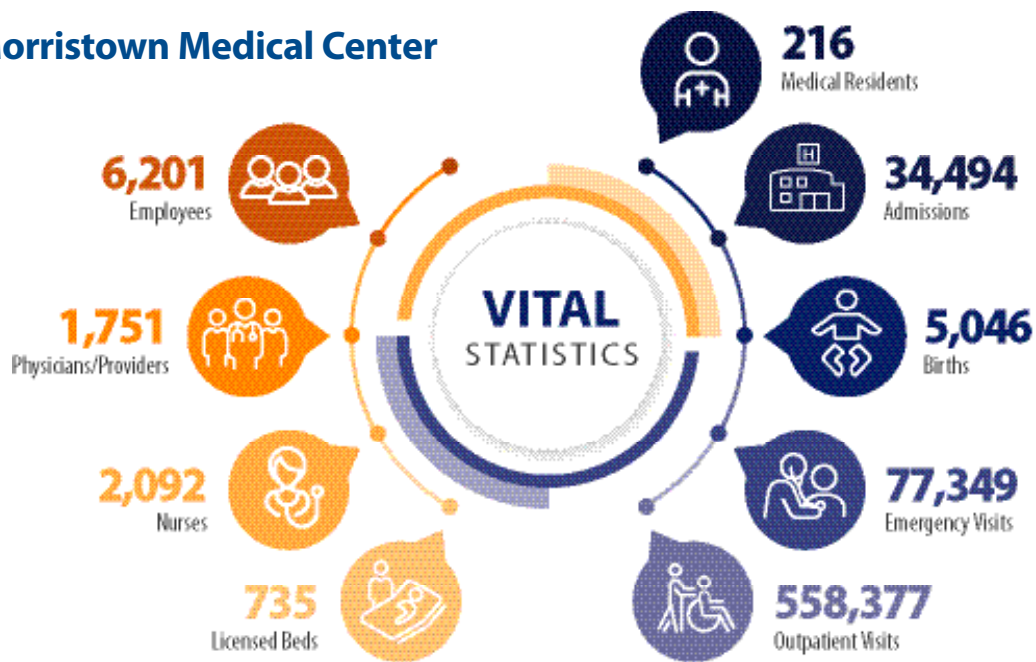
I felt that my greatest contribution to the staff was the gift of resiliency. We cried together and we celebrated as a team through group discussions, gatherings, and by planting a "Garden of Souls" on the grounds of Mt. Kemble in remembrance of all those we lost during our time together.

Through the use of effective communication, collaboration, resilience, and innovation, we were able to craft a caring environment that brought together an amazing and dedicated group of nurses to provide the very best care to our patients when their families could not be by their side.

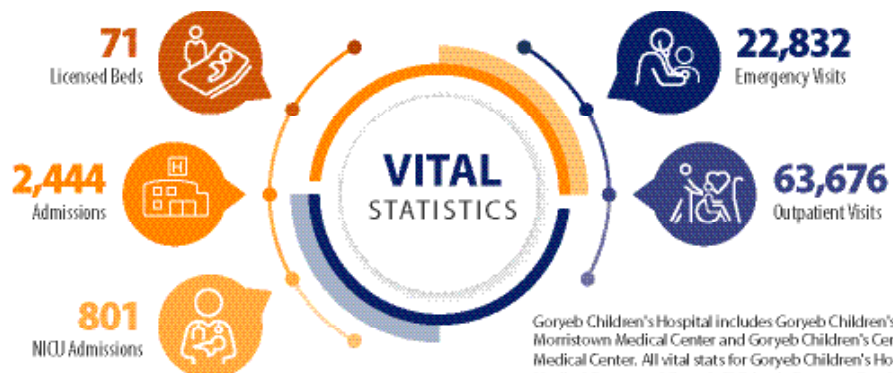
- > Maternity Center received Baby-Friendly USA™ recertification. The Baby-Friendly initiative is a worldwide program of the World Health Organization and UNICEF to protect, promote and support the practice of breastfeeding. Accreditation criteria include full compliance with international codes, written infant feeding policies, ongoing monitoring practices and competence of staff.
- > In August 2020, the Morristown Medical Center Hire Learning Residency Program implemented a longitudinal competency tool specific for novice nurses. The tool includes a novice nurse self-assessment, incremental preceptor assessments, and mentor/peer assessments at six months and 12 months into the first year. The competency statements align with the Nurse of the Future Core Competencies to assess the incremental growth and development of a novice nurse.



Morristown Medical Center



Goryeb Children's Hospital



Goryeb Children's Hospital includes Goryeb Children's Hospital at Morristown Medical Center and Goryeb Children's Center at Overlook Medical Center. All vital stats for Goryeb Children's Hospital at Morristown Medical Center and Goryeb Children's Center at Overlook Medical Center are also included in figures for Morristown and Overlook medical centers.

A photograph of a nurse in a hospital room, wearing a white uniform and a stethoscope, standing with arms outstretched. The room contains medical equipment like a bed, a monitor, and a cart. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

NURSING AT

Overlook
Medical
Center

Year in Review

- > Collaboration and collegiality have always been hallmarks of interdisciplinary practice at Overlook Medical Center, but never more than in the past year. Each one of our professional nursing staff led unit-based, redeployed teams that were focused during the pandemic on patient safety, patient and family engagement, and supporting the professional practice environment. Education and training were essential, utilizing team members' inherent skills and interests as we identified redeployment roles. Communication abounded—daily hospital-wide and unit-based huddles, written communication in our Friday Flashes, and increased rounding in each unit, department and area. Every single member of the nursing team became an innovator and a patient safety coach. In high reliability organization (HRO) language – the term, “I’ve got your back” was the phrase of the day.



2020 – The Tie That Binds Us Together

Mary Patricia Sullivan,
MSN, RN, CNS, CENP

Chief Nursing Officer

I consider it one of my greatest professional honors to serve and lead over 1,100 registered nurses at Overlook Medical Center. Our professional nurses along with the entire patient care team has risen to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and consistently provided compassionate, high-quality care in the face of uncertainty, loss, and anxiety.

Innovation, collaboration, agility, resilience, and compassion are just a few of the words that come to mind when I think of the Atlantic Health Nurse in 2020 and beyond. The myriad challenges of COVID-19 brought new meaning to the age-old adage “it takes a village.”

During this unprecedented year, we still found so many opportunities to reward and recognize the Overlook Medical Center Nurse, including receiving Magnet® recognition on October 9th. Months of managing the devastating effects of the pandemic truly highlighted how our nurses integrated the Magnet® principles into the fabric of our organizational culture. Contributions to our nursing body of knowledge through research and professional education, including advancing our national board certification and academic progression; recognition of our nurses at the state and national levels; nursing involvement in our Joint Commission disease-specific certifications and national commendations for outstanding clinical outcomes are a reflection of leader and staff collaboration of the highest magnitude. There is no greater testament to our commitment to excellence than building on the culture of nursing at Overlook Medical Center, including what we have done, and continue to do, prior to and since this crisis began.

I am so very proud of the many accomplishments of nursing for their individual and collective dedication and relentless pursuit of excellence. I sincerely thank each of you for your commitment to the profession we share.

Overlook Medical Center (cont'd.)

Year of Nursing Strength and Innovation During COVID-19

Gina Monk, BSN, RN, CCRN

Critical Care Clinical Nurse

Working through a pandemic is not something that can be taught; there is no way to prepare for the distress that comes along with caring for innocent people all impacted by the same evil. There is no way to teach how to handle the haunting memories you are left with once the units have been cleaned and normal work functions have resumed.

The truth is no one knows what we went through. There is no easy way to explain the extreme exhaustion we felt after shifts of one emergency after another, or how we treated our patients with dignity in the midst of chaos.

And, in the peak of this chaos, we took redeployed nurses under our wings to teach them to care for the critically ill. Even though our spirits were weak and our bodies were tired, we stayed strong for them because soon enough they too would feel the heartbreak we had been experiencing all along.

But most of all, I will never forget the moment I realized this was truly a pandemic — seeing “DNR” written across a glass door. In this moment, I knew this pandemic was bigger than us and the policies and procedures engrained in our minds. We were adaptive and innovative when we had to be. We were advocates when no one else could be. COVID-19 hit us like a hurricane, and even though the “sun has come out,” there will always be a cloud of darkness that lingers above to remind us of a time that did not break us but made us more resilient than ever.

- > After the major surges of COVID-19, there were periods of recovery: patient recovery, staff resiliency and ongoing recovery, service recovery, and our overarching goal of caring for our community. Incorporating many of the best learnings from the COVID-19 period at Overlook Medical Center



¹Includes Overlook Medical Center Emergency Services, Union Campus.

included communication strategies, urgency of care, and learning about caring in a virtual environment. The highlight was our inaugural ANCC virtual Magnet® survey – filled with excitement and pride in sharing what nursing at Overlook Medical Center is all about. The announcement from ANCC recognizing Overlook Medical Center as a Magnet® recognized organization came on October 9, 2020.

- > Wrapping up the year was our first entirely virtual triennial Joint Commission survey, as well as our Disease-Specific Spine survey. In retrospect, 2020 exemplified the conceptual framework of our nursing theorist Dr. Kristen Swanson perfectly: Knowing, being with, doing for, enabling, and maintaining belief.

dedicated spiritual loved one **advocate** prepared **kind** teamwork dependable
contributing **respectful**
compassion wellness degree **accepting**
rights **RN** helper **making a difference**
training ethical **loving** accountable **integrity**
new skills strength **giving** tireless emergency visit
commitment **birth** **giving** pandemic
advance care **giving** extraordinary caring **patience**
outpatient visit purpose **excel.** **lead** **service**
diverse **family** **nursing** communication
professional **challenge** **educator**
COVID-19 **innovate** understanding
continuing education level of care **leadership**
support **listener** patient care
licensed **holistic** focus **learners** **caring** new knowledge
survive **team member** visiting nurse **selfless** community
positivity science **healers** recover **hope** **humility**
endurance **heart** resilient **responder**
critical thinking **empathy** virtual visit **high quality care**



NURSING AT

Western Region — Newton and Hackettstown Medical Centers

Year in Review

Western Region:

- > The Western Region supported the community in many ways during the pandemic. One of our local facilities is one of New Jersey's largest nursing homes. They experienced a surge of COVID-19 in mid-April; as a result, the staff at the nursing home were stunned by the sheer number of residents who were falling ill. In addition, they were at a loss for proper PPE, therefore, many staff were impacted as well. The Directors of Nursing at both Newton Medical Center and Hackettstown Medical Center were charged with overseeing the task of testing approximately 1,000 residents and staff members in a short period of time. Nurse managers, assistant nurse managers, and clinical nurses stepped in to assist with swabbing. The Western Region team members who assisted left with a sense of giving back to those in need.



*Perseverance, Strength,
Teamwork and
Extraordinary Caring*

**Donna Marie Watridge,
BSN, MBA, RN, CCRN-K**

Chief Nursing Officer

The WHO deemed 2020 "Year of the Nurse." In 2020, nurses throughout our organization exemplified what it means to be a nurse. Our nurses faced each day with an unwavering dedication to our patients and their families. You laughed, you cried, you persevered. This annual report highlights all the many accomplishments achieved in the midst of the most daunting challenges of our careers in health care.

I hope you can look back, reflect and be proud; now more than ever, we must find ways to relax and recharge so that we may be able to continue the amazing work we are doing.

The incredible milestones of 2020 include but are not limited to: Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation and a new hybrid OR at Hackettstown Medical Center; the Newton Medical Center Catheterization Lab was licensed to perform STEMI and experienced a successful Joint Commission survey; the Western Region achieved designation for Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE). Both sites realized a 45% increase in PACT applications, many of which were electronically submitted.

To our nurses and all health care heroes, I would like to thank you all personally for your vital contribution during this most unprecedented year. You have shown great perseverance, strength, collaboration with team members across the system, and most importantly, you have provided meaningful and extraordinary caring for our patients and their loved ones. My heart goes out to you and your families for all you are doing to care for people and keep our communities safe. I couldn't be prouder of you and I am honored to work alongside you.

Western Region — Newton and Hackettstown Medical Centers (cont'd.)

2020 Year of the Nurse, Year of Rising Above the Pandemic

Bethany Lichtenwalner, RN
Charlene O'Sullivan, RN

2020 proved to be a year that no one could have predicted. Our teams never worked as hard or for a more honorable cause than for patients and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside incredible support from our community, we rose to the challenge when it felt like we just couldn't do any more. We cried, we laughed, we celebrated the successes, and we mourned the losses.

When spring gave way to summer, we buckled down as we worked to rebalance our personal and professional lives. Throughout the summer all efforts focused on readiness.

Our lessons learned drove the creation of COVID-19 Playbooks that outline processes in preparation for future surges of patients with COVID-19. When it came, we were ready.

We ended 2020 hopeful for a better 2021 for all of humanity, and we definitely take pride in the work we accomplished, the lives we touched, and the team members who worked alongside us.

- > During possibly the most stressful and difficult year to be a member of the health care community, our partners in caring supported our teams through many challenges. Our personal wellness both physically, emotionally, and spiritually needed to be supported so that we could continue to deliver Extraordinary Caring to our patients and our communities. At Newton Medical Center, we are blessed to have Randolph Parks as our manager of Spiritual Services. Quick to lend an ear or a supportive fist bump, Randy kept our spirits high during unprecedented lows. Throughout most of 2020 Randy would end each of our daily enterprise huddles with a prayer, a meditation, a funny cartoon, or even a song. As the pandemic started to wane its first wave, we continued to feel enriched by his presence and he continues doing so every Monday and Friday. Newton Medical Center continued Wellness Walks all year led by Randy indoors or out to support resiliency and well-being. There has been nothing like the past year and we hope there never will be again, but we know that we have each other's back to lift each other up, in no small part by Randy's constant positivity, empathy and compassion.

Newton Medical Center





> At the start of 2020, Hackettstown Medical Center's Shared Governance Councils were truly solidifying. The peer review process was rolled out and unit-based councils were emerging. The revised Professional Practice model and the conceptual framework of our nurse theorist, Imogene King, were introduced to Hackettstown Medical Center nurses. Two forums selected for education of our staff were Skills Days and Workplace for Facebook. A plan was put into place to merge the Hackettstown and Newton medical centers' councils so they could

become Western Region councils. This plan was necessary so that both medical centers could submit the ANCC Pathway to Excellence® document as the Western Region and begin the Magnet® journey. As a result of patient care needs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, our Shared Governance initiative took a pause from mid-March until June 2020. Yet, we did successfully meet the goal of merging all the councils by end of year 2020.

Hackettstown Medical Center



Selected Awards

Our nursing excellence contributed to the following awards and recognitions:



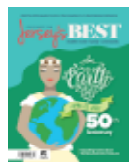
Atlantic Health System:

- > Integrated health care delivery system with >350 sites of care
- > Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For (12 consecutive years)
- > Human Rights Campaign's LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader



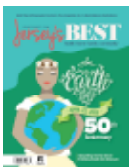
Chilton Medical Center:

- > Achieved ANCC Magnet® recognition
- > Nationally recognized for high quality care by *U.S. News & World Report* for Heart Failure and COPD.
- > Recipient of the Healthgrades 2020 Patient Safety Excellence Award™ and recognized among the Top 10% in the nation for patient safety
- > Recognized with an "A" hospital safety grade by the Leapfrog Group Spring 2020 and Fall 2020
- > Top Hospital in NJ under 350 beds by Castle Connolly fifth year in a row (since 2016), and a top performer for the treatment of congestive heart failure, breast cancer, prostate cancer, stroke, high risk pregnancy and birth, pain management and neurological disorders
- > Recipient of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's 2020 Get with the Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus & Target: Stroke, Honor Roll Elite Plus Award
- > Exemplar Status for Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) Program
- > Awarded the Bronze Standard – Level 3 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation (GEDA) accreditation by The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)



Hackettstown Medical Center:

- > Hackettstown Medical Center was ranked among the Top Hospitals in New Jersey under 350 beds by Castle Connolly for 2020 and ranked a top performer for Breast Cancer, Congestive Heart Failure, Neurological Disorder, Pain Management, Prostate Cancer, Stroke
- > Recipient of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus & Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus Award (2019-2020)
- > Awarded the Bronze Standard – Level 3 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation (GEDA) accreditation by The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)
- > Geriatric Care received the Member status for the NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) program
- > Joint Commission Primary Stroke Center certification





Morristown Medical Center:

- > Achieved ANCC Magnet® recognition (since 2001)
- > #1 hospital in NJ (*U.S. News & World Report*) and the only acute care hospital in New Jersey to be nationally ranked, and among the best 50 hospitals in the nation for Orthopedics (#28), Gynecology (#32), and Cardiology & Heart Surgery (#38)
- > Named one of the World's Best Hospitals by *Newsweek*.
- > Recognized as top 1% of hospitals in the nation (America's 50 Best Hospitals, Healthgrades)
- > Named to Becker's Healthcare 2020 list of "100 Great Hospitals in America"
- > Highest rating in its five-star system, from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- > Recognized with an "A" hospital safety grade by The Leapfrog Group nine consecutive times
- > Recipient of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's 2020 Get with the Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus & Target: Stroke, Honor Roll Elite Plus Award; Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll
- > CareChex - #1 Hospital in NJ for Patient Safety in Women's Health & Cancer Care



Newton Medical Center:

- > Newton Medical Center was ranked among the Top Hospitals in New Jersey under 350 beds by Castle Connolly for 2020. Also ranked a top performer for Breast Cancer, Congestive Heart Failure, High Risk Pregnancy and Birth, Neurological Disorder, Pain Management, Prostate Cancer, Stroke
- > Recognized by The Leapfrog Group with an "A" hospital safety grade. Spring 2020 and Fall 2020
- > Newton Medical Center has been recognized as one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for Stroke Care (Healthgrades)
- > Recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as High Performing in COPD
- > Recipient of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus & Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus Award (2019-2020)
- > Awarded the Bronze Standard – Level 3 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation (GEDA) accreditation by The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)

Selected Awards (cont'd.)



Overlook Medical Center:

- > Achieved ANCC Magnet® recognition
- > Best Regional Hospital, recognized in three types of care, (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- > Named one of the World's Best Hospitals by *Newsweek*
- > Recognized as top 1% of hospitals in the nation (America's 50 Best Hospitals, Healthgrades)
- > Practice Greenhealth Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award
- > CareChex - #1 Hospital in NJ for Medical Excellence in Major Neurosurgery, Women's Health and Cancer Care
- > Recipient of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's 2020 Get with the Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus & Target: Stroke, Honor Roll Elite Plus Award; Advanced Therapy; Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll
- > Emergency Nurses Lantern Award – Union Emergency Department
- > NICHE designation (Nurses Improving Care for Health System Elders) with five exemplars

Atlantic Health System COVID-19 Pandemic Response:

- > 569,000+ total vaccines administered, dedicated outreach team for underserved populations
- > Morris County first NJ county to fully vaccinate 70% of its adult residents
- > 13,700 teacher vaccinations
- > 12+ vaccination sites including mobile clinics
- > 44,000+ COVID-19 patients treated
- > Launched the Atlantic COVID Recovery Center to help patients who are "Long Haulers," suffering post-COVID-19 symptoms (post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2, or PASC)
- > 20+ COVID-19 clinical trials



Shared Governance Membership

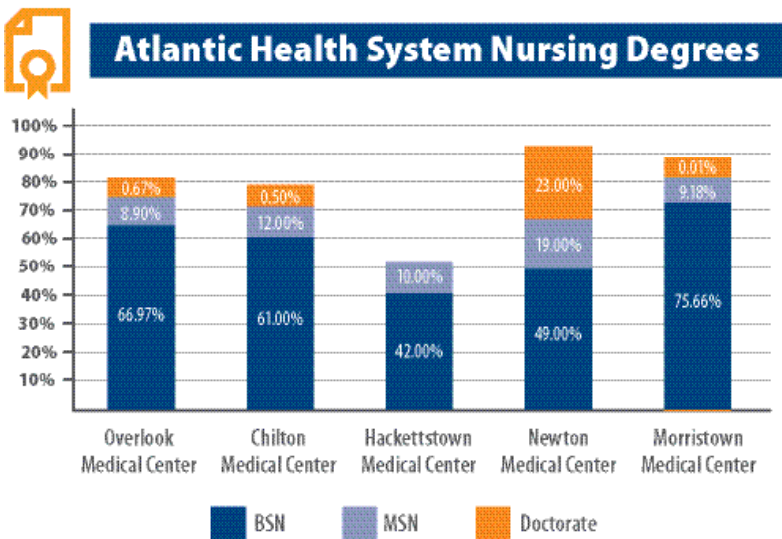
Atlantic Health System’s shared governance model describes the active involvement of nurses who practice in every specialty, across the entire continuum of care. Nurses from Chilton, Hackettstown, Morristown, Newton and Overlook medical centers, Goryeb Children’s Hospital, as well as those from Atlantic Medical Group and Atlantic Visiting Nurse are all highly valued for their unparalleled contributions to patient safety and quality. We believe that nursing excellence is truly driven by nurses who participate in decisions and lead change in clinical practice standards, quality improvement, professional development and research. At Atlantic Health System, the patient is at the center of everything we do, and therefore, the primary focus of nursing shared governance is at the unit/department/ambulatory level – where nurses provide direct patient care. Ideas for improvement, projects and recommendations that are generated at the unit level flow upward via nursing representatives to the site-

Shared Governance Membership



specific and system-level councils that are organized and empowered to create evidence-based practice and workplace standards. Chief nursing officers (CNOs) at each site promote active engagement, mentoring and support to ensure that there is a culture of positivity, inclusivity and sharing of best practices. Such transformational leadership leads to the best possible innovations that benefit the patient, the clinical practice setting, the intraprofessional team as well as nurses themselves. Councils consult and collaborate with each other in order to facilitate change, ensure quality patient care and contribute to new knowledge. The mission, vision and values of Atlantic Health System provide a renewable source of focus for our shared governance structure, which, in turn, promotes an outstanding culture of excellence throughout the entire system.

Nursing by the Numbers



Pandemic Nursing

Critical Care Education Was More Critical Than Ever Before

System-Wide Education

The first COVID-19 surge found our medical centers caring for an increasingly critically ill patient population. Seemingly overnight, as we reached ICU capacity across the system, we converted medical-surgical units to intensive care units. Our organizational strategy was to activate subject matter experts, embedded



throughout the system, to rapidly deploy critical care education in order to prepare each hospital for their conversion to COVID-19 centers of excellence. Traditional classroom content incorporated experienced nursing support for the noncritical care nurse in the form of education specialists and seasoned, expert preceptors who served as “buddies” in all settings.

System support included:

- > Coordination of nursing education departments at each site who emergently formed planning committees, and collaborated with their colleagues throughout the system, to best identify available evidence-based resources, to create a four-hour Critical Care Course for medical-surgical nurses without ICU experience and ambulatory nurses with former ICU experience.

- > Sharing of resources via virtual meetings, such as COVID-19 information offered by AACN, critical care practitioners across all sites, and access to CDC and relevant regulatory recommendations.
- > In total, 35 courses were held across the system within a one- to two-month period, with 411 nurses completing the program, thereby meeting the urgent need for critical care nurses.
- > Based on nurses’ feedback, during the lull between the first and second surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, each site developed a course, Nursing Care for the Mechanically Ventilated Patient, which included the ventilator practice the initial course lacked. This course was so widely popular that it was held monthly throughout the summer and fall of 2020.



dedicated spiritual loved one **advocate** prepared **kind** teamwork dependable **respectful**
contributing **wellness** degree **accepting**
compassion comforter **making a difference**
RN rights **helper** training ethical **loving** accountable **integrity**
new skills **strength** tireless **giving** **integrity** emergency visit
commitment **birth** **giving** **pandemic**
advance care **care** extraordinary caring **patience**
outpatient visit purpose **excel.** **lead** **service**
diverse **family** **nursing** communication
professional **challenge** **educator**
COVID-19 **innovate** understanding
continuing education level of care **leadership**
support **listener** patient care
holistic licensed **learners** **caring** new knowledge
focus survive **community**
team member visiting nurse **selfless**
positivity science **healers** recover **hope** **humility**
endurance **heart** resilient **responder**
critical thinking **empathy** virtual visit **high quality care**

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark business suit, is sitting at a desk. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In front of her is a computer monitor displaying a webpage. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text "Transformational Leadership" is centered over the image in a white, serif font.

Transformational Leadership

Leadership Is Essential

Transformational leadership abounds at Atlantic Health System and is essential to outstanding patient care and nursing workforce excellence. It is identified as an extremely effective leadership style that empowers staff to participate in decision making at the unit and organizational levels, while leveraging the unique talents and contributions of the individual nurse. Transformational Leadership is the first component of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet® Recognition Program. Both Magnet® and the Pathway to Excellence® programs are prestigious awards that recognize nursing and organizational excellence that is aligned with their rigorous frameworks, as evidenced by superior quality outcomes that are nationally benchmarked. Our exceptional outcomes greatly impact the nursing staff and patient care at each of our organizations and hold the key to world-class nursing and patient safety, quality and satisfaction.



Transformational Leadership (cont'd.)

Chilton and Overlook Medical Centers Achieve Magnet® Recognition in 2020

Magnet® recognition is the highest national credential for nursing excellence, serving as the gold standard for organizational achievement. With Magnet® recognition, Chilton Medical Center and Overlook Medical Center join the global Magnet® community — a select group, which includes only 9% of all U.S. hospitals.

Both hospitals participated in a rigorous evaluation process, beginning with the application process, submission of documents and finally, visits by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) appraisers; March 2020 for Chilton Medical Center and August 2020 for Overlook Medical Center. For Chilton Medical Center, the date of their survey coincided with



the first patient diagnosed with COVID-19 who entered the Emergency Department

as the appraisers arrived at their doors. In fact, one of Chilton Medical Center's appraisers was not able to join her team when they visited, because of mandatory lockdowns in her county of origin.

For Overlook Medical Center, it represented the first virtual survey for Atlantic Health System, and one of the first conducted nationally and internationally. There, three Magnet® surveyors conducted in-depth sessions with nurses and intraprofessional teams and rounded on each area with an embedded nursing presence, interacting with nurses and staff by way of iPads atop specially designed carts.



Rather than pose insurmountable hurdles, the virtual Magnet® survey served to further highlight how Overlook's professional nursing team comes together to innovate to provide excellent care.

During the site visits, Magnet® appraisers noted that Overlook Medical Center nurses spoke highly of the organization in terms of support for educational activities, professional certification, and time to participate in shared governance activities, and that the words "Family" and "Team" were often used by nurses to describe the culture at Overlook Medical Center. At Chilton Medical Center, there was unanimous endorsement by nurses of their culture of caring for each other, which is reflected in the contributions of nurses at every level in innovation, shared governance, nursing education and the advancement of new knowledge.

Magnet® recognition is a testament to the countless contributions that nurses, in collaboration with all of our valued team members, and the support



of administrative and physician leaders, provide to achieve quality patient care. Overlook Medical Center and Chilton Medical Center are now among the prestigious hospitals to achieve this global designation. Both organizations celebrated their



outstanding achievements; Chilton Medical Center on October 1, 2020. Overlook Medical Center will be celebrated for this outstanding achievement on May 12, 2021. The celebration reaffirms the hard work and dedication of the entire organization who are dedicated to support and empower each other to achieve professional goals and improve the health and wellness of our communities we serve.

Morristown Medical Center Magnet4Europe

Well on our way toward the achievement of our sixth Magnet® recognition, we have partnered with the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to take part in a unique pilot program called Magnet4Europe. There are over 500 Magnet® recognized hospitals in eight countries, with the vast majority located in the U.S. Only one hospital has sustained Magnet® recognition in Europe, and 60 European hospitals are currently participating in this pilot program, located in Belgium, England, Germany, Ireland and Sweden. Nursing goals for the project include the utilization of a gap analysis to inform, establish and prioritize action plans to improve

the work environment. We will identify, recognize and share examples of excellence with the European partner to whom we have been matched, in Cork, Ireland, and provide international interpretations where appropriate. Like their U.S. counterparts, nurses in every part of the world can experience burnout, depression and fatigue. The goal of the Magnet4Europe pilot is to test the use of the evidence-based Magnet® designed work models to enhance nurses' well-being, retention, productivity and patient outcomes. According to the ANCC, "Hospitalized patients can only be assured safe and effective care when their nurses and physicians are able to perform at their best, and this requires healthy work environments."

Western Region Pathway to Excellence, Pathway to the Future

Newton Medical Center is currently designated as a Pathway to Excellence® organization. In 2020, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) approved Newton Medical Center and Hackettstown Medical Center to submit a joint application for Pathway to Excellence® in June 2020, as the Western Region. Pathway to Excellence® establishes our organizations as the premier designation for nurses and patients, as it recognizes healthy work environments where nurses can truly excel, promotes the highest standards and supports their own needs. The Pathway to Excellence® standards have the potential to impact employee turnover, job satisfaction and engagement, productivity and teamwork, nursing-sensitive quality indicators, and patient satisfaction. We truly believe that success is a journey, not a destination, and therefore, we are also on the journey to Magnet® recognition in the near future.

A person wearing a surgical cap and a face mask, shown in profile. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The person is looking towards the right side of the frame.

Exemplary Professional Practice

The Journey to Achievement

Exemplary Professional Practice is built upon two extremely critical cornerstones: The Professional Practice Model (PPM) and the Care Delivery System. New nursing roles, innovative practices and monitoring the outcomes of structures and processes are so essential to bring sharp focus to continuous improvement in our journey toward high reliability organization (HRO) status.

Atlantic Medical Group (AMG)

Advanced Care at Home

AMG supported the “Advanced Care at Home” program, which extended care for patients who had been seen in our Emergency department or acute care setting for treatment of COVID-19. This program, a collaboration between Atlantic Health System and AMG physicians and nurses, allowed us to continue to provide care in the home to ensure patients continued to progress toward improved health outcomes. The program was best suited for patients who were going home with oxygen or who required regular monitoring of clinical progress, including temperature, blood oxygen levels and clinical symptoms. Nurses would contact the patient Day 1 post discharge for a nurse check-in, and then reach out to the patient one to two times a day as needed until discharged from the program. A virtual on-call provider was available after hours for emergencies. Time to recovery varied, the goal of the program was to get patients back to independent recovery from COVID-19. Once goals reached, patient was transitioned back to his/her primary care physician.

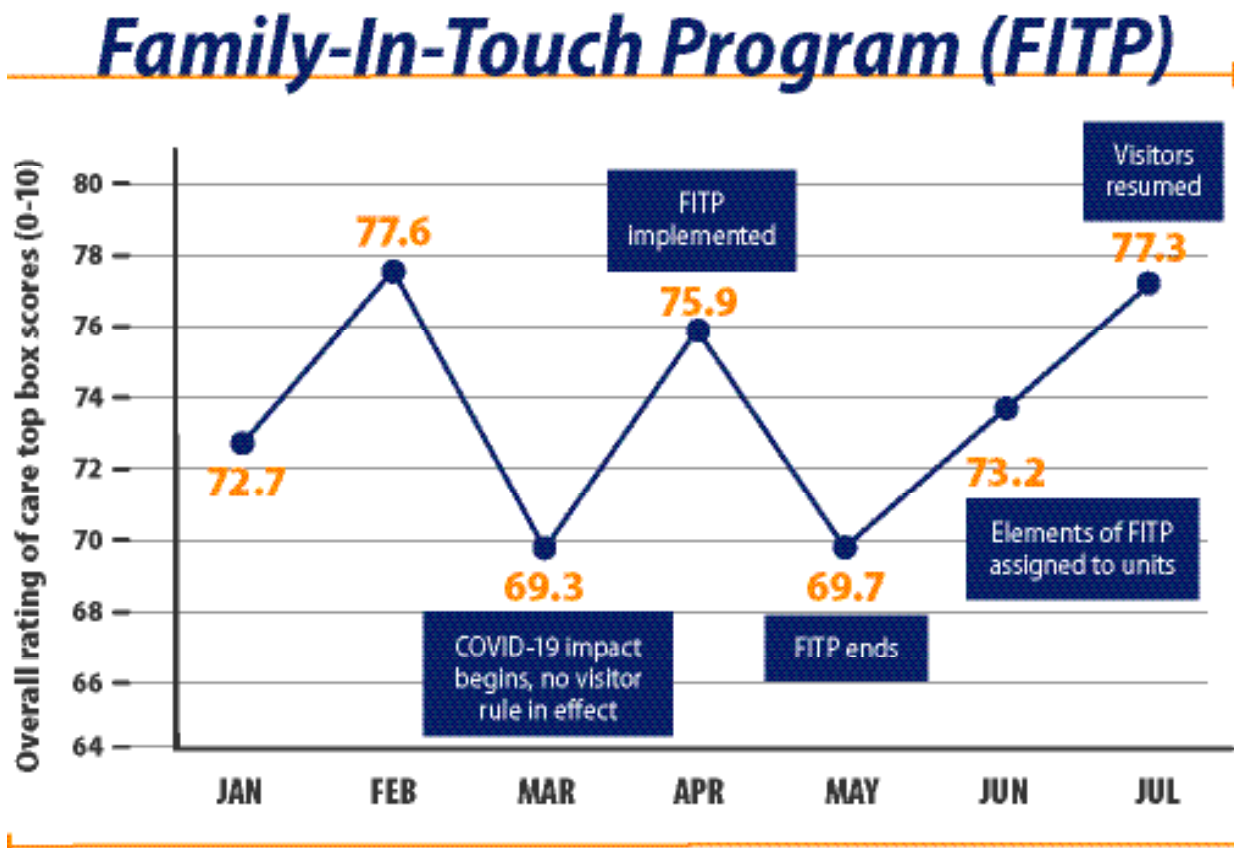
Exemplary Professional Practice (cont'd.)

Chilton Medical Center

The Family-In-Touch Program

The "Family-In-Touch Program" (FITP) was launched with clinical nurses Jackie Taylor, RN, and Kelli Sanfilippo, RN, who volunteered to be redeployed, and strategically support the efforts of the health care team on the units in their quest to communicate with the families of all of our patients. The clinical nurses identified the family members who were the patient's "preferred contact" in the electronic medical record (EMR). Each nurse in the FITP telephoned every patient's family member on each particular unit, with an average of 50 calls per day. These calls supplemented the typical

communication from the nurses and physicians on the units. The FITP plans includes a review of the patient's plan of care and in real-time, provided clinical updates, such as lab values and oxygen delivery method; this, because virtually all family members were seeking reassurance that there is demonstrable progression from some type of breathing support system in their loved ones. Outcomes included improved patient engagement scores in the area of Top Box, Rating of Care. The Family-In-Touch Program was created by Anna Deluca, manager of Patient Experience, and directly involved nurses Jackie Taylor and Kelli Sanfilippo.



Morristown Medical Center

Jin Shin Jyutsu Sessions

Jin Shin Jyutsu (JSJ) is a hands-on art form, originating in Japan and rooted in classical and ancient Asian medical traditions. It may be practiced at any moment, in any space. You can apply the practice to yourself (Self-Help), or to others, using gentle touch to balance the body. A Zen room was also created where staff could go to de-stress if needed. In March 2020, the medical staff of inpatient units Kahn 5 and Deskovick 2 began caring for patients with COVID-19. By early May, it became apparent that staff were beginning to feel the impact of mentally processing daily interactions and events, such as the rising acuity, death and dying, and patients' separation from loved ones. The Unit Manager, Unit Educator, and the Psychiatric APN, with whom we frequently worked, collaborated to create a unit-based virtual support group for those impacted by or caring for these patients. Since inception to present, the group, led by our unit-based Nurse Educator and Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurse, has met numerous times with high team engagement. These sessions provided a safe environment to openly discuss the challenges of caring for this patient population, share experiences and coping strategies. The group has been well received and continues to meet nearly 10 months later. During 2020, the Holistic Nurses continued teaching JSJ Self-Help virtually over our facility's social media site. At the height of the pandemic in our region, (March 30 to April 23, 2020) over 8,500 health care workers accessed the video education and didactic information. For those employees who viewed the sessions, feedback on social media was overwhelmingly positive. Also, these nurses taught JSJ Self-Help on different hospital units and guided health care staff through experiential exercises for stress reduction. Additionally, we created a one-page teaching sheet, Jin Shin Jyutsu for Resilience, published on the

American Holistic Nurse Association website (ahna.org). This is a downloadable resource for nurses worldwide.

Overlook Medical Center

Collaborating to Implement Technology in Response to COVID-19

During the first few weeks of the pandemic, the surge of critical care patients with COVID-19 requiring ventilatory support was higher than ever experienced at Overlook Medical Center. This patient population was unique in that they required ventilatory support; however, the regulation of their breathing meant that they were asynchronous with the mechanical ventilator, requiring the use of paralytics and sedation in order to optimize synchronized breathing with the ventilator. Complicating care is the difficulty in assessment of the level of sedation, because of the use of paralytics. Dr. Kotecha, Medical Director of Critical Care, Nicole Hradil, MSN, RN, CCRN, Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist, and Charlene Ruggiero, BSN, RN, Nurse Director of Critical Care, collaborated and implemented the bispectral index monitor (BIS). The BIS provides objective sedation scales which prevents over or under sedation when paralytics were administered to ensure patient comfort yet provide therapeutic interventions.



Exemplary Professional Practice (cont'd.)

Western Region

Clinical Event Documentation

Newly licensed nurses are challenged upon entry into the acute care environment. Documentation of clinical events such as codes or rapid responses can create anxiety and insecurity among novice nurses. The nurse residency program coordinator for the Western Region identified code and rapid response documentation as an opportunity for improvement. Education and support are crucial to success in the fast-paced hospital setting for new team members. While the staff was shown clinical event documentation during their electronic health record training, a gap was evident, and subsequently, a code documentation class was created by a collaboration between the clinical nurse specialists and nursing informatics manager. The session's goal was to create an interactive simulation infused code and rapid response documentation experience and elevate the participants' knowledge and comfort with documentation. We based the program's objective upon Knowles' Theory of adult learning and incorporated simulation to engage the learners. The program's objectives were for participants to gain the skills and confidence to document a clinical event accurately. The program participants were evaluated throughout the class with a mix of didactic instruction and video and hands-on simulation. Additionally, the class participants were provided with reference materials.

The class was provided to 10 newly licensed nurses. The participants were asked to rate their comfort level on a Likert scale for documentation and participation in codes and rapid responses pre- and post-intervention. Comfort level with documentation and a clinical event increased by an average of 40% for all participants. This class could easily be replicated and supports simulation to improve comfort level with documentation and

clinical events. Implications for nursing education practice include utilizing simulation when teaching documentation in an electronic health record and providing access to tip sheets for reference for future use. After the educational experience we received this feedback from one of the Hire Learners: "I charted for an RRT! I feel like I did a good job. I reviewed everything I did with the charge nurse and she thinks we got everything as well. It was hard! There is no way I would have been able to keep up without our recent RRT/Code documentation class. That class is gold and every Hire Learner should have to do it from now on! It seriously made such a big difference in how well I knew where to find things, and I felt prepared for the fast pace thanks to the simulation we did in the computer lab with Cristen."

Decreasing Readmissions for COPD


The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) limit payments to hospitals with high readmission rates for patients admitted with acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (AECOPD). COPD remains the third most common cause of readmission among Medicare beneficiaries, occurring in 60% of patients within one year of hospital discharge and in 30% within three months of discharge. Decreasing readmissions in this patient population improves patient health and decreases health care utilization of resources. We hypothesized a COPD care bundle delivered by a multidisciplinary health care team in conjunction with a follow-up appointment made before discharge would reduce readmission rates for AECOPD.

A retrospective cohort design study with pre- and post-intervention arms was conducted. From September 2018 to December of 2018, patients admitted with AECOPD at Hackettstown and Newton medical centers were enrolled in the pre-intervention group. Subsequently, an evidence-based COPD care bundle

was developed with three primary objectives: (1) Patient education on COPD by health care providers before discharge; (2) Completion of an individualized self-management COPD action plan to be used by patients after hospital discharge; and (3) Timely outpatient follow-up with a pulmonologist within five days of discharge. After this COPD care bundle was implemented in May of 2019, patients admitted with AECOPD from May of 2019 to December of 2020 were placed in the post-intervention group. Patient characteristics, hospital length of stay (LOS), discharge location, and readmission rates for both groups were collected. The primary outcome was decreasing 30-day readmission rates.

Utilizing an interdisciplinary, evidence-based COPD approach is crucial in preventing recurrent hospitalizations in the COPD patient population. This quality improvement project in COPD management demonstrated sustainable and creative strategies to reduce readmission rates and prevent penalties. A review of the data demonstrated statistical significance when utilizing a COPD bundle with early follow-up appointments with a $p < 0.001$ and a 58.6% reduction in 30-day readmissions over the 20-month period.



The image features three women standing side-by-side, all wearing face masks. They are dressed in professional attire, including blouses and jackets. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text 'Structural Empowerment' is centered over the image in a white, serif font.

Structural Empowerment

The Power of Positive Organizational Support

Within the Magnet® model, Structural Empowerment takes into account the organizational structure, professional development, community outreach, personnel policies and programs, and the well-defined promotion of a positive nursing image. The shared governance philosophy, its decision-making outcomes, professional accountability all are based within each hospital, yet also extend to the profession of nursing as a whole. For example, through community outreach, nurses positively influence health and well-being of individuals outside the organization. At Atlantic Health System, nurses have the resources to perform their life-saving roles, can access information to gain more knowledge and expertise, have support to execute their responsibilities and finally, enjoy numerous opportunities for professional career growth.



Structural Empowerment (cont'd.)

Atlantic Health System

Survivor Celebration

The Carol G. Simon Cancer Center Survivor Celebration is a system-wide annual tradition of gathering and celebrating the milestones that past and present patients have achieved. Our 2020 Celebration needed to take on a different format, as we were unable to gather in person, so nurses innovated to create a meaningful celebration, to recognize our survivors through a virtual format that included numerous heartfelt, patient-centered testimonials. These testimonials were in the form of stories, poems, and songs. Written, read and/or performed by survivors in their homes or on the front steps of their homes. Keeping with tradition, it was incredibly moving and inspirational, conveying the message that, despite the pandemic, all of the cancer survivors are in our thoughts and their lives, celebrated.

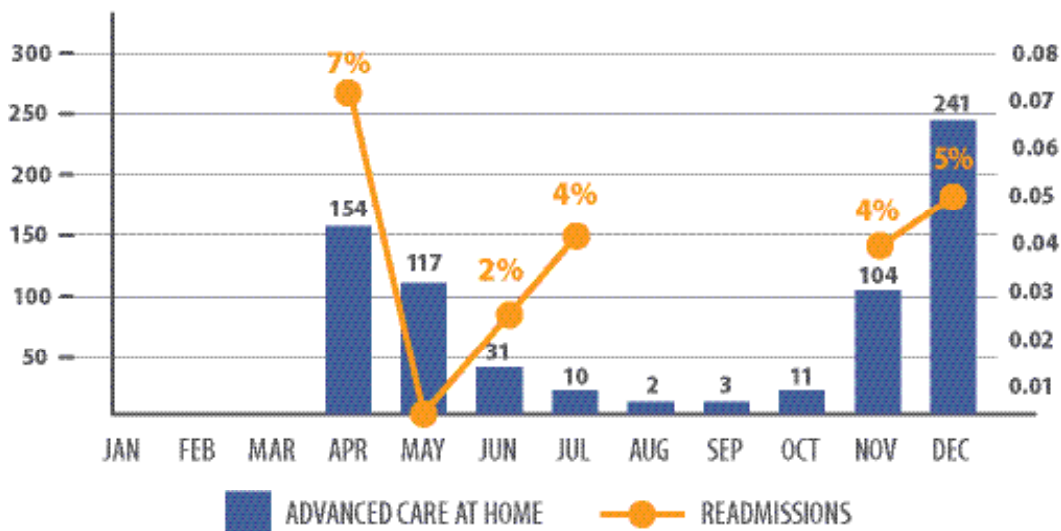
Atlantic Visiting Nurse

Community Outreach

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the normal paradigm of traditional home care services. Patients and their caregivers were fearful of clinicians coming into their home. As a result, Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) instituted virtual visits to augment the standard patient care plan. Fewer in-person home visits were performed, and patient assessments and education occurred via virtual visit technology such as FaceTime and Zoom. During 2020, over 2,100 virtual visits were completed in the home care and hospice programs from the AVN team.

Remote patient monitoring was expanded to meet the needs of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 after hospital discharge or an emergency room visit. Traditional telehealth numbers increased, with 1,088 patients monitored during 2020 via Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) system. Additionally, AVN participated in an Atlantic Health System initiative, the Advanced Care at Home program (ACAH), in which patients with COVID-19 were discharged from the

COVID-19: Unique Cases and Readmissions



hospital with oxygen, a pulse oximeter and a mobile application uploaded to their mobile phone. Patients are monitored daily by an RN, via virtual visits and telephone visits. Additionally, the patient receives two virtual visits by an Atlantic Medical Group physician to ensure the patient is safely on the road to recovery. This program provided daily patient assessment and education by nursing, which contributed to recovery and reduced hospital readmissions. In 2020, 30-day rehospitalization rates for patients on the program ranged from 2-7% as compared to a rehospitalization rate of 15.8%, an incredible accomplishment.

AVN team members provided infection prevention education to community facilities and a local children's camp staff. Nurse liaisons, who usually are responsible for home care referrals, took on new roles such as a COVID-19 telephone triage program at a senior living community. They also worked with assisted living facilities (ALF), senior centers, nursing homes and senior living communities to develop COVID-19 testing procedures and also provided testing. Community health staff completed COVID-19 focused communicable disease investigations and contact tracing.

In response to several referral sources requesting that our staff be tested prior to entering their facility to care for a patient, AVN developed a rapid COVID-19 testing process in order to meet the needs of our patients.

Chilton Medical Center

National Board Certification Soars During the Pandemic

National certification provides validation that the nurse has professional credibility, mastery of skills, knowledge, improved clinical judgment, and commitment to their specialty of practice. Certified nurses are respected amongst their peers and patients, which contributes to positive patient outcomes, job satisfaction, and retention. The COVID-19 pandemic directly affected nursing practice and nurses were faced with new challenges and learning opportunities. Although nurses were focused on providing high quality care during the pandemic, they understood the importance of continuous learning and being completely current in their professional practice. Chilton Medical Center supported nurses in their pursuit of obtaining national certifications in the following specialties: ANCC Gerontology Nurse and Nursing Professional Development, AACN Critical Care Nurse, Progressive Care Certified Nurse, and Certified Emergency Nurse by obtaining a grant that provided funding for review courses. As a result of this initiative, there was an increase of 13% in national board certification by the eligible nurses at Chilton Medical Center.



Structural Empowerment (cont'd.)

Morristown Medical Center

Nutritional Needs Met by Adapting New Practices

During the surge of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 patients, our Food & Nutrition department collaborated with nursing, physicians, and respiratory therapy to address the unique nutritional needs of this patient population. To decrease exposure risk to personnel, care was bundled for specific times and communicated to departments servicing the patient. Pharmacists retimed appropriate medications and dietitians re-aligned mealtimes to ensure the units had meals ready when they entered the isolation rooms. As feedback

was provided from the nurses and the patients, the Food & Nutrition department adapted their delivery, packaging, storage, and choice selection of meals.



For example, the initial use of paper trays provided infection prevention and for easy disposal, but unintentionally cooled down food intended to be hot on delivery. Understanding that warm food gave comfort to some patients, adaptations were made to keep the trays on unit in closed storage carts to keep them warm until nurses could bring them in with their bundled care. For this population who had difficulty with breathing, dietitians and the kitchen adapted by offering more cold temperature options to patients, such as sandwiches, salads, and fruit platters, as well as foods that took less energy to eat. If patients were too out of breath to relay their preferences directly by phone, dietitians collaborated with nurses to gain insight on the patients' needs and preferences.

The dietitians' assessments often identified a higher vitamin and supplement need, which was met with collaboration that increased orders and supplies of supplements on units to provide with their bundled care. Sedated and prone positioned patients posed specific challenges with feeding for which the teams made accommodations. Interprofessional collaboration and communication was the key as they took care to ensure feedings were stopped on position changes but continued feeding while in prone and supine positions to ensure nutritional goals were met.

Overlook Medical Center

The role of the wound care nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic was critical to the prevention of pressure injuries. With the rising incidence of tracheostomies, a new dressing application, created by Pam Hughes, RN, CWOCN, minimized the risk of medical device pressure injuries. With bundling of care to minimize exposure, a nurse collaborated with her wound care colleagues, developed and implemented a pressure injury prevention bundle. The bundle included: Mepilex dressings applied to the buttocks, waffle cushions on top of the mattress, and Z-Flex boots to prevent heel/foot pressure injuries. The implementation of this bundle strategy effectively reduced pressure injuries for those who were most at risk.

Pressure Injury Prevention



Western Region

Newton Medical Center Chemo Cart Saves Time and Resources

As a community hospital, the Newton Medical Center nurses who administer chemotherapy were challenged with multiple trips back to their home unit to gather supplies, when giving chemotherapeutic agents throughout the hospital. Corinne Engelhart, RN, and Ashley Mickel, RN, saw this as an opportunity to innovate and modify their workflow. The nurses hypothesized that by creating a mobile chemo cart they would



decrease time wasted in gathering supplies. They repurposed a code cart and projected that both time and associated staff expenses would be saved. The cart was labeled and filled with supplies necessary for administering

chemotherapy, such as a spill kit and special adapters. They attached a yellow bin on the side of the cart for disposal post-administration of hazardous waste. In addition, a reference binder was placed on the top of the cart with relevant policies and information sheets.

The time spent gathering supplies pre- and post-intervention was measured. On average, the time saved for off-unit chemotherapy administration was 60 minutes. This equates to roughly \$765.00 cost savings/year. The nurses even began using the cart on the second floor, Medical-Surgical unit (where most chemo agents are administered) and found an average time savings of 15 minutes per treatment, which represented

an additional cost savings of \$168.75/year. Nursing satisfaction with the new process was also measured pre- and post-intervention, using a targeted post-intervention evaluation tool, Likert scale, which yielded a 60% increase in satisfaction with the new process.

This innovative quality improvement project streamlined the process for chemotherapy both on and off the home unit of the nurses who administer chemotherapy. The total time savings for the project was 60 minutes for off-unit treatments and 15 minutes for on-unit administrations. Cost savings for the 12-month period was \$933.75. In addition, the project was both fiscally and environmentally responsible as the cart converted to the mobile chemo cart was repurposed and not purchased. This project could easily be replicated in any setting.

Hackettstown Medical Center Health Education Screening

The Community Health department delivers a range of health education programming targeted to populations across the lifespan, and since the onset of COVID-19, has developed a best-practice model for virtual community education via virtual platforms. Topics vary from month to month with key programming centered around prevention and health priorities as identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment process. The department aligns with various service lines and departments to coordinate timely, relevant, and targeted topics to address the needs of the community at large and data-driven needs within the population. During the height of the pandemic, we coordinated with Bridget Jones, MSN, BA, RN, CDE, who is the Program Manager for the Diabetes and Nutrition Centers at Newton and Hackettstown medical centers, to bring much needed educational programs related to COVID-19 and diabetes to the surrounding communities.

Structural Empowerment (cont'd.)

Intubation Boxes Prevent Spread of COVID-19

Nurses are inherently creative; for example, Leslie Deherde, RN, knew that intubation was a high-risk procedure for aerosolizing the COVID-19 virus and resulting in the risk of exposure to our team members. Leslie discovered that another organization utilized intubation boxes as a best practice so she designed a model, with Burns Construction Maintenance in Flanders, NJ, who then provided boxes for Hackettstown Medical Center as well as all of our other medical centers. Next, Leslie partnered with Tania Cutone, MSN, RN-C, Director



of Emergency Services at Chilton Medical Center, wherein two additional variations of the boxes were developed. The COVID-19 pandemic did not come with a playbook and it challenged Atlantic Health System team members to create new on-the-fly workflows. This innovation was named as one of Atlantic Health System's top innovations during the pandemic and speaks volumes to the power of nursing when we join forces to solve a critical challenge.

dedicated spiritual loved one **advocate** prepared **kind** teamwork dependable
contributing **respectful**
compassion wellness degree **accepting**
rights **RN** helper **making a difference**
training ethical **loving** accountable **integrity**
new skills strength **giving** tireless emergency visit
commitment **birth** **giving** pandemic
advance care extraordinary caring **patience**
outpatient visit purpose **excel.** **lead** **service**
diverse **family** **nursing** communication
professional challenge **innovate** dedication
COVID-19 **innovate** educator
understanding **leadership**
continuing education level of care **support** **listener** patient care
holistic licensed **learners** **caring** new knowledge
focus survive **community**
team member visiting nurse **selfless**
positivity science **healers** recover **hope** **humility**
endurance **heart** resilient **responder**
critical thinking **empathy** virtual visit **high quality care**



New Knowledge,
Innovations and
Improvements

System-Wide Collaborative Project

Animal-Assisted Activity Research Reduces Anxiety in Older Adults

Animal-assisted activity (AAA) involves informal interactions between humans and animals during hospitalization and has been shown to improve symptoms of anxiety, depression, fatigue, fear, and pain in various populations. Atlantic Health System medical centers have robust, active AAA programs to support our patients, which offer a prime opportunity to conduct original research to explore the impact of these programs on patient outcomes. Nursing researchers led a partnership with other NJ hospitals to conduct a multisite study examining the impact of AAA on anxiety among older adult patients (≥65 years



Research Team Members

Team Member	Role	Hospital
Mildred Ortu Kowalski	Principal Investigator	
Nowai Keleekai-Brapoh	Sub-Investigator; Principal Investigator	Overlook
Jennifer Mattera	Sub-Investigator; Principal Investigator	Newton
Carnette Smith	Sub-Investigator; Principal Investigator	Chilton
Anna DeLuca	Sub-Investigator	Chilton
Maria Dungca	Sub-Investigator	Chilton
Nicole Fusco	Sub-Investigator	Chilton
Kelly Giammanco	Sub-Investigator	Morristown
Angie Grippo	Sub-Investigator	Morristown
Margaret Grow	Sub-Investigator	Morristown
Kristen Malig	Sub-Investigator	Chilton
Kristi Mobus	Sub-Investigator	Morristown
Maria Stratton	Sub-Investigator	Overlook

New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements (cont'd.)

old). Our trained human-dog team provided 10- to 15-minute visits during which time eligible participants could pet and talk with the dog. A validated anxiety tool was administered before and after the visit. A total of 141 participants took part in the research. Results showed a statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) decrease in pre- and post-visit anxiety scores using the Spielberger State-Trait Inventory. Decreases were noted especially among females and those who own dogs.

Clinical Deterioration Reports

Two of our sites created methodologies to immediately identify patients who are most at risk for clinical decompensation, adding to the body of knowledge related to critical care nursing and resulting in improved care for patients who are at extremely high risk for complications. An interdisciplinary, evidence-based approach that leads to a reduction in hospital events is crucial in reducing mortality.

Chilton Medical Center

The Internally Developed Deterioration Report Saves Lives

In March of 2020, a sudden and rapidly expanding population of critically ill patients with COVID-19 represented the vast majority of our inpatient census. At the time, there was little research and information available about the diagnosis, treatment and care of patients with COVID-19. Therefore, it became extremely urgent to develop a predictive mechanism that would quickly identify patients who were most at risk of requiring ventilator support, critical care staffing and ICU beds. An intraprofessional team led by Dr. Maureen Schneider, Chief Nursing and Operations Officer, created a clinical deterioration report that clearly and concisely



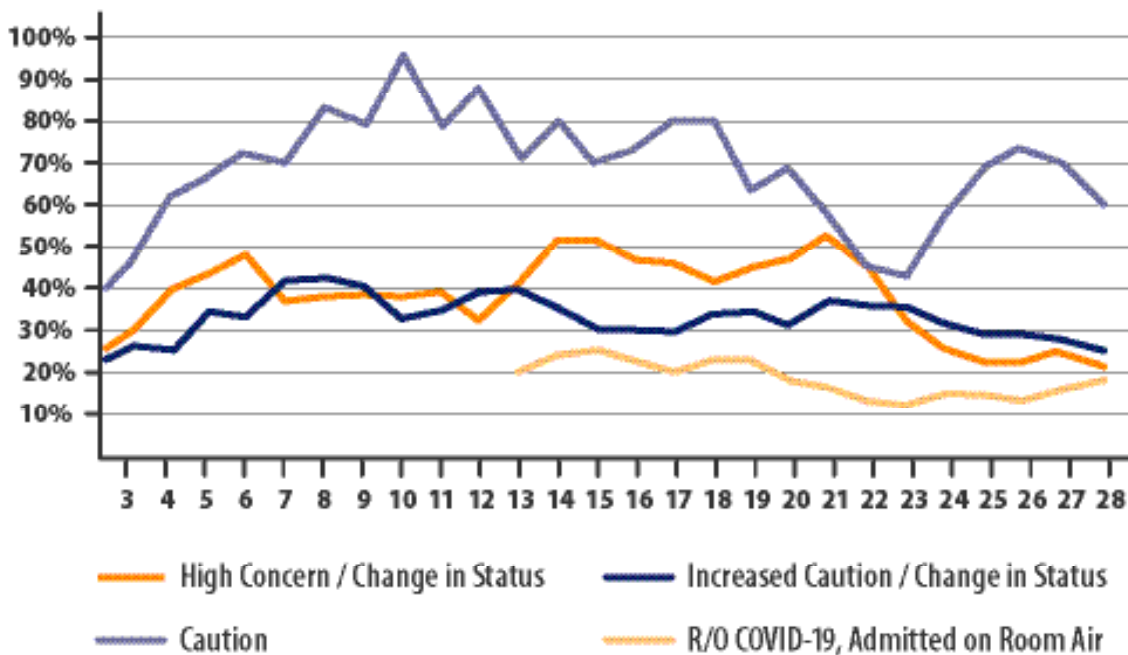
communicates the patient’s current acuity level and risk for deterioration in those admitted with a diagnosis of COVID-19, based on laboratory results, radiological reports, oxygen needs, and clinical presentation. Every patient within the organization was evaluated twice a day, with a risk stratification methodology, by two nurse educators. They created an easily identifiable color-coded acuity report and hand-entered it into an Excel spreadsheet. Key components of the project included subject matter expert reviews by the specialist physician and nurse practitioner leads and distribution of the daily acuity report to all of the providers, nursing management, and hospital leadership. One important goal of the report was to communicate the acuity of the patient population in the non-ICU settings, so that

intubations and re-intubations could be prevented and save lives. Comparison to daily rapid response team activation reports revealed high predictive ability of the deterioration report. A provider satisfaction survey was also administered, with the majority of respondents indicating a high degree of provider integration of the Deterioration Report into the clinician’s daily assessment activities. Moreover, the administrative and nurse management team utilized the Deterioration Report to optimally plan for this most critically ill and potentially unstable patient population. Chilton Medical Center’s successful approach was shared with each of the five Atlantic Health System hospitals to further enhance care for our most vulnerable patients.

Average Daily COVID-19 Deterioration



April 3-28, 2020



New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements (cont'd.)

Hackettstown Medical Center

The Power of the Deterioration Index and Interprofessional Collaboration

At Hackettstown Medical Center, Information System Services (ISS) and an interdisciplinary team inclusive of nursing, harnessed their electronic medical record's (EMR) power to develop and implement a predictive clinical modelling instrument in January 2020. A review of the data revealed a 58.8% reduction in rapid response calls after 10 months of utilizing the model with a proactive interdisciplinary approach. The mortality index also decreased from 0.8 to 0.2, yielding a 75% reduction in observed-to-expected mortality. The EMR tool, which pulls in from 17 different data elements, includes guidelines that are incorporated into the nurses' focused assessment, and guides discussions with the patient's provider. An overview report was also developed that allows health care team members to review trending reports of vital signs and correlating risk scores. Additionally, the scores were color-coded to help quickly identify at-risk patients from the unit board, leading to rapid identification by the clinical care team. Patients with a 20% change in score over 12 hours or a DI ≥ 45 results in a focused EMR review, patient assessment, and coordination of a care planning discussion to prevent further patient

decline. Interprofessional collaboration and full support by senior leadership was the key to success at Hackettstown Medical Center. This project was accepted as a podium presentation at the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses National Conference in fall of 2021.



Morristown Medical Center

Post-Op Standardized Education Bundle for Ostomates Reduced Urgent Outpatient Visits

Toni McTigue, MSN, APN-C, CWOCN,
Melissa Marrero, MSN, RN, CWCN,
Mildred Ortu Kowalski, PhD, RN, NE-BC,
Karen Long, MSN, APN-C, CWOCN
Stephanie Chiu, MS

Individuals with a new ostomy are being discharged earlier and encounter many stoma-related complications after discharge. A shortened hospital stay reduces the time individuals learn about self-care management and community resources. A focused Standardized Education Bundle (SEB) with outpatient follow-up was explored to help individuals avoid urgent visits to the outpatient ostomy clinic (OOC). The SEB included self-care management, troubleshooting, community resources and contact information. The purpose of this comparative study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a SEB for patients who were discharged from an acute care facility with a new ostomy. A secondary aim was to evaluate the impact of the SEB on the percent of urgent vs. planned post-operative visits compared to pre-intervention. Phone call surveys and completion of an appointment at OOC were used to evaluate the nurse-driven SEB intervention. The phone call identified care needs, provided support, and determined resource utilization. A retrospective review of patients (May - December 2017) was also conducted. Of individuals who sought OOC services within 60 days, 91% returned for complications. Of visits within 30 days, 100% were for complications. Prospectively, 51 individuals consented to be in the study and received the SEB while hospitalized. Forty-nine (n = 49) individuals were eligible for the study. Follow-up phone calls were attempted within two weeks of discharge to administer the survey. Of the 49, 37 (76%) were reached and completed the survey. Retrospective and prospective groups were comparable. Eight individuals (n=8, 16.3%) attended routine follow-up visits within 30 days. An

87.5% reduction in urgent visits were observed after use of the SEB, $p < 0.001$. This study contributes to new knowledge of best practice, using a SEB, for the post-operative ostomy patient as they transition from the inpatient hospital setting to the community.

Reference: Nagle, D., Pare, T., Keenan, E., Marcet, S.T., & Poylin, V. (2012). Ileostomy pathway virtually eliminates readmissions for dehydration in new ostomates. *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum*, 55(12) 1266 – 1272.

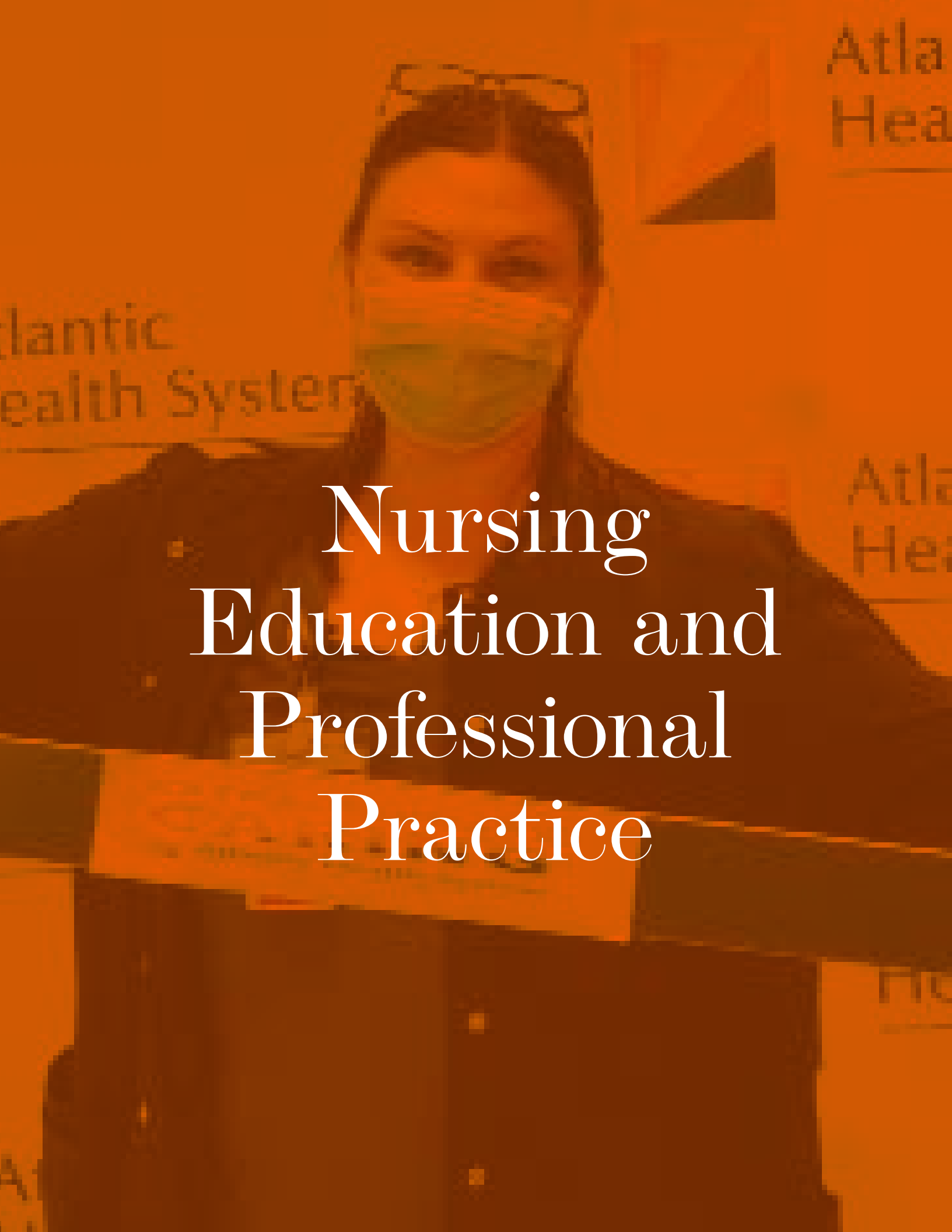
Overlook Medical Center

Anchoring a Professional Practice Model: Success Through Collaboration

Nowai Keleekai-Brapoh, PhD, RN, NPD-BC
Deborah Toresco, BSN, RN, NE-BC

The development of a nursing professional practice model (PPM) is foundational to an organization's articulation of professional nursing practice. Unique to each hospital, the PPM serves as the theoretical, practical and visual representation of the underlying culture and provision of nursing care. At Overlook Medical Center, the experience was one of inclusion and engagement of clinical nurses in the development, implementation and evaluation of the new PPM as an integral step in the Magnet® journey. Transformational nurse leaders closely collaborated with clinical staff members; they were, in turn, empowered to take additional ownership of their practice by embedding it into nursing processes at all levels. The project included a restructuring of the shared governance model. Both pre- and post-implementation evaluation of the PPM confirmed that it was strongly aligned with nursing practice. Collaboration that successfully integrates a PPM can create a common identity for nurses in diverse practice settings and roles within an organization.

Reference: Keleekai-Brapoh, N., Toresco, D. (2020). Anchoring a professional practice model: Success through collaboration. *Nurse Leader*. 18(6) 552 - 556.



Nursing Education and Professional Practice

A Life of Learning

Safe, effective and innovative nursing practice is built upon a solid foundation of nursing education, with numerous programs, critical resources and a philosophy of life-long learning in both the orientation and continuing education stages of career development. Atlantic Health System nurses obtain advanced degrees, advance their specialty and professional knowledge, achieve national board certification, become evidence-based scholars and contribute to the profession through scholarship, collaborative projects and opportunities for career growth.



Nursing Education and Professional Practice (cont'd.)

2020 Highlights

Atlantic Health System Provider Unit for Continuing Education

In order to provide patient-centered care and improve the health within our communities, we are dedicated to ensuring that our educational enrichments provide the knowledge and skills that result in high quality care, competent techniques and compassionate, holistic interventions. Cross-campus excellence ensures that site planners share their expertise and create content grounded in evidence-based practice guidelines throughout the entire system.

Attractive to both the novice and experienced nurses, our educational opportunities emphatically demonstrate our investment in our greatest asset, our team members. Because of social distancing mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we creatively transformed the method in which we offered educational classes from “live in-person” instruction to virtual and online formats. We employ Kahoot! (polling), breakout rooms, and live chat features in order to continuously engage our learners. Technical difficulties have made the virtual world challenging at times, but as we all learn and share, we are improving our skills and learning new strategies of engagement.

Nurturing Front-Line Nurses’ Professional Growth: The Atlantic Health System Career Advancement Program

The Atlantic Health System Registered Nurse Professional Advancement Career Track (PACT) program supports the professional goals of nurses, enhances patient care, and helps us support the achievement of organizational strategic goals. Our career ladder application criteria build upon the Mission, Vision and Shared Values of Atlantic Health System, and are centered around Professionalism, Respect, Involvement, Dignity and Excellence (PRIDE).

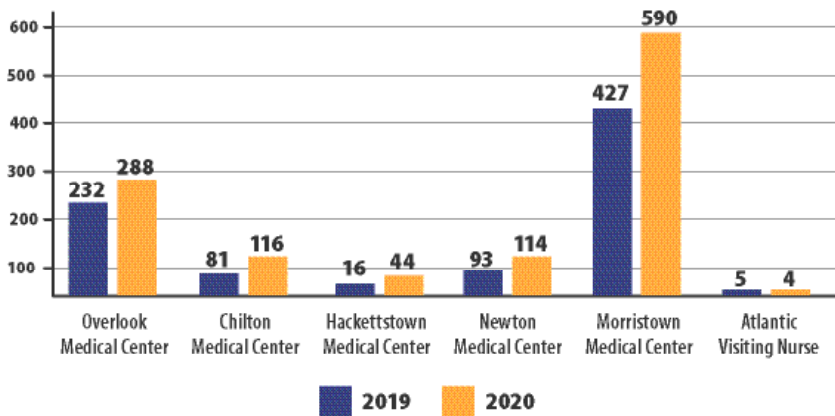


Continuing Nursing Education (CNE)

Total # of courses/NEW CNE Activities in 2020	164/119
CNE Activities Repeated	63
Total CNE Activity Offerings Provided	424
Participants	6860
Total Virtual Programs Offered	117
Virtual Programs Offered	27.50%



Atlantic Health System PACT Participants



Publications

Atlantic Medical Group

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Podium and Poster Presentations

Atlantic Center for Research Symposium • Morristown, NJ • October 19, 2020



Future Directions

As we, along with the rest of the nation, move into a new post-COVID-19 reality, there are many heartfelt lessons learned about how nurses practice our proud profession. When 2020 was declared as the “Year of the Nurse” by the World Health Organization (WHO), we could not have known exactly what the year would hold for us as nurses. Once the COVID-19 crisis began, it was unrelenting, nearly shocking in its sheer force; the sudden onset and the severity of symptoms, widespread acuity and the alarming transmission and mortality rates affected us and changed us forever. Yet, as you read through the pages of our *Atlantic Health System 2020 Nursing Annual Report*, there is also a distinct sense of collective action and pride in ourselves and each other. The strength and courage we saw among our nursing teams every day, was exemplified by innovation, creativity, and truly remarkable, shared partnerships across disciplines.

We learned that:

- > Self-care and self-compassion are not optional. Thanks to a wide variety and depth of mental health and resiliency services, as well as specially designed-education modules, our nurses learned new ways to take care of themselves and each other. Going forward, our Nurse Practice Council will now be investigating how to incorporate healthy self-care behaviors into our annual nursing competency bundles. These are designed to further enhance awareness of the various programs that are available, evaluate unhealthy practices, encourage reflection/self-awareness and promote optimal health throughout our entire Atlantic Health System nursing staff.
- > We must expand upon our recognition programs so that energy and innovation thrives at all levels of our nursing programs, particularly those that focus upon the nurse-patient experience and fostering community engagement.
- > Our nursing shared governance model will now include the construction of our Executive Council, in order to coordinate the activities of the Atlantic Health System nursing councils across the system. In the year ahead, we will invest in the work occurring at the unit-based council level and provide the necessary support, education and coaching so that shared governance can truly thrive and our future leaders emerge as strong, capable navigators of our future growth and development.
- > We must standardize activities across the system, such as competency elements, and share certification preparation programs, in order to improve the knowledge capacity of our nurses in the pre-hospital, acute care and post-hospital continuum of care. Therefore, forming and strengthening bonds with Atlantic Medical Group, Atlantic Visiting Nurse and other ambulatory programs has never been more critical.
- > Through the standardization of Incident-Based Peer Review (IBPR), we will achieve our goal of high reliability organizations across the system.
- > We must increase the number of Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) at each site and address transition to practice for new graduate nurses.

- > We must work with our EMR teams to reduce documentation burden and improve nursing efficiency, quality and safety and improve RN satisfaction.
- > Communities truly need us, now more than ever. Therefore, we must explore partnerships with agencies, particularly those who serve at-risk individuals, to promote opportunities for nurses to volunteer.

In 2021, we will continue to provide a high degree of focus upon nurses' professional development and succession planning. As the pandemic taught us, our community, as well as the entire nation, needs a pipeline of knowledgeable, caring nurses who are adaptable to the ever-changing health care landscape and provide outstanding care, no matter where the setting. The 2020 "Year of the Nurse" has been extended through 2021, and is a great opportunity to honor all of the truly outstanding nurses at Atlantic Health System. This issue, the first-ever *Atlantic Health System 2020 Nursing Annual Report*, is dedicated to them. Congratulations to every nurse!



