



More than healthcare. **PEOPLECARE**

# 2021 Nursing Report



# Living Wellstar's Values, Every Day.

**NURSING MISSION**

Caring Compassionately.  
Practicing Professionally.

**NURSING VISION**

Wellstar nurses will be recognized as national leaders in the practice of nursing by promoting:



Holistic patient-  
and family-  
centered care



Quality and  
innovation



Education



Evidence-  
based  
practice



Nursing  
research

**WELLSTAR MISSION**

To enhance the health  
and well-being of every  
person we serve.

**WELLSTAR VISION**

To deliver world-class  
healthcare to every  
person, every time.

**WELLSTAR VALUES**

We serve with  
compassion.



We pursue  
excellence.



We honor every  
voice.

**OUR JOURNEY OF EXCELLENCE**

Over the past year, nurses and care team members across Wellstar have sought creative solutions to address the challenges of the global pandemic. Together, you ensured that our patients and communities received scholarly compassionate care embracing our mission to “enhance the health and well-being of every person we serve.”

As we continue our journey of excellence, I am excited to share with you that Wellstar has been recognized nationally for our commitment to excellence in nursing practice. This past year, Wellstar Paulding Hospital received Magnet Designation and was awarded the Baldrige Award for Excellence by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). As a system, we are actively continuing our efforts across all practice environments to promote nursing certification, unit-based designations, and employing the frameworks of Pathways to Excellence, Baldrige, and Magnet toward excellence in practice and the care of our patients and communities.

This year we accelerated our efforts to integrate virtual and digital health systems into our model of care. We implemented a TeleSitter program in emergency and inpatient settings across the system that has demonstrated improvements in patient safety and increased top of education practice, reducing workload burden on nurses and care teams.

Wellstar continued to grow our partnerships with Georgia’s top nursing schools. These foundational relationships have supported us in necessary workforce innovations to address the changing healthcare environment. They have allowed us to partner with all levels of education, starting with high schools across Georgia. Our academic partnerships also allow us to provide continuous career development and work-based learning opportunities. We continue to invest in our current workforce by providing them with career opportunities and financial investments for team members to advance their degrees. We also launched Wellstar’s first Certified Nursing Assistant Pipeline program through our academic partnerships, promoting internal and external candidates to begin their clinical careers.

As you read the report, I encourage you to reflect on the significant accomplishments of the past year. You will find inspiration as you read the incredible stories of nurses leading innovations in processes, people, and technology in the pursuit of excellence. Despite the challenges, our nurses continue to express joy in their work and are committed to the patients, each other, and the communities served by Wellstar.

It is a great honor and privilege to recognize the devoted nurses and care team partners across Wellstar.

With pride and gratitude,



*Jill Case-Wirth*

**Jill Case-Wirth, MHA, BSN, RN, FAAN**  
Senior Vice President and  
Chief Nurse Executive  
Wellstar Health System

**WELLSTAR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE MODEL**





PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In an increasingly complex healthcare environment, nursing is a rich profession that offers a wide range of specialties with lifelong learning at all levels of practice. Wellstar is committed to supporting our nurses in their pursuit of ongoing education and professional growth. By adopting evidence-based practice and participating in nursing research, we will advance the nursing profession and cultivate careers. Participation in professional organizations is valued and encouraged.



WELLSTAR CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

## System shows commitment to team education

**Wellstar Health System supports both education and certifications because evidence shows that patient outcomes improve when nurses have a minimum of a BSN and specialty certifications.**

In fiscal-year 2021, Wellstar invested more than \$1.5 million to advance nursing-specific academic education for 496 employees. A total of nearly \$3 million funded educational advancement for 927 Wellstar employees in nursing, as well as business, healthcare management, and related fields.

A System-wide certification bonus policy (PS-19 Annual Recognition-National Nursing Certification) was launched in late 2020 to reward and recognize RNs who have earned or maintained a national nursing certification. Following two submission periods, Wellstar Health System recognized more than 1,000 nurses with \$1,000 certification bonuses, for a total of more than \$1 million.

As well, Wellstar and the System's Center for Nursing Excellence (CFNE) support certification and recertification through:

- The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Success Pays® program for specific certifications listed on the CFNE Certification SharePoint page.
- Sponsoring certification review courses, including Nurse Executive, Neonatal ICU, and Emergency Room. Several free or discounted programs are planned for FY22.
- CE Unlimited/Healthstream®'s free certification review courses, which can be accessed from the main page of e-Source or directly from the CFNE Certification page.



# 496

nursing employees received  
tuition support

**\$1,519,131**  
invested



# 927

employees in nursing,  
business, healthcare  
management, and related  
fields received tuition support

**\$2,903,133**  
invested





WELLSTAR CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

## Partnership boosts nurse manager leadership training

**Nurse managers and others in middle management are considered an integral part of the healthcare team, though they have one of the most demanding and challenging roles secondary to job expectations and responsibilities. While they are considered organizational change agents, they receive limited time for training and development.**

To foster leadership competencies and skill development among nurse managers, the Wellstar Center for Nursing Excellence partnered with Organizational Learning and Kennesaw State University on a comprehensive training program. In-person learning included a single-day workshop, follow-up for reinforcement, three Gallup Strength Based coaching sessions and a self-paced online 40-hour course in the Essentials of Nurse Manager Orientation.

A total of 46 managers completed the CliftonStrengths®, a pre-post multifactor leadership questionnaire and the Connor-Davidson Resilience scale®. Significant improvements were noted in areas including transformational leadership, leader effectiveness, leader satisfaction, and resilience. Not surprisingly, there was no post-measurement change in the avoidance score, a measure of transactional leadership. Nurse leader certification was related

to higher resiliency scores post-training.

To facilitate effective leader training opportunities, nurses need the knowledge, skills, and abilities to pursue higher levels of leadership. Also essential are the desire to do so and a belief in the value of the effort. This leadership development training program was a success because it proactively addressed potential future challenges among nurse managers. ■

WELLSTAR NURSING SCHOLARS

## First Nursing Excellence scholars honored

**On October 12, 2021, Wellstar Health System welcomed the inaugural group of Kennesaw State University's Tom and Betty Phillip Scholars, and 10 Wellstar Excellence in Nursing Scholars (WENS), into the Wellstar family.**



The 25 Tom and Betty Phillips Scholars were selected for meeting the KSU Journey Honors College criteria and essays selected by the Wellstar School of Nursing (WSN). These scholars will have access to supervisors from the Honors Learning experience with nursing majors, offers to serve as second readers for Capstones, and to serve as liaisons to the Honors College. They will receive preferential access to Wellstar-hosted recruitment events, including the nurse extern/intern and new graduate residency program.

All scholars will receive the support and guidance of an RN Nurse Career Navigator, formal mentoring, and shadowing opportunities in the specialty areas of their choice, and exposure and engagement with nurse leaders, as well as shared governance and leadership councils. Finally, the scholars will spend one-on-one time with nurse executive leaders as well as attend, as a guest of the chief nurse executive, the AJC Nurse of the Year conference.

Wellstar Health System and the KSU WSN looks forward to working with and developing these next nurse leaders as we step forward and usher in a new era of innovation in nursing. ■

### Wellstar Excellence in Nursing Scholars (WENS)

Yewande Bello	Justyse Williams
Janet Hall	Jade Preston
Adanech Jones	Alice Smith
Emily Meyer	Samantha Sowers
Gabbie Slayton	Anna Stansbury

### Wellstar Tom and Betty Phillips Elite Honors Nursing Scholars

Gillian Baltrus	Hanna Lee
Ciana Bilal	Isabella Lidalen
Serene Boudiab	Diane Nguyen
Katrina Burrow	Thelema Ogunjiofor
Alexia Chambert	Carson Payne
Caleb Cruz	Denise Peeples-McDearmont
Isabelle Cusson	Maggie Riggs
Keller Danberry	Nicolas Roncal
Irina De La Rosa	Malika Sesay
Emily Downs	Riley Walker
Abby Evans	Gabby Washington
William Huelsbeck	Zahrah Wright
Nakeyah Kendrick	







PEOPLECARE

## Nurses going above and beyond

by Brandy Knight, RN at the Florence Hand Home, Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center

A nurse in a long-term care facility wears many hats. Especially during the global pandemic, Florence Hand Home nurses were everywhere, doing everything possible for the residents. We have been singers, dancers, and entertainers. We have been gardeners, hula dancers, and s'mores makers. We have been hymn singers and manicurists. We have provided a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, a replacement family.

When Sunday school was cancelled because no visitors were allowed, a nurse grabbed her Bible and came in on her off day to offer residents the lessons that they dearly missed.

It was nurses who helped our activities department make virgin daiquiris and play outdoor games. We soaked up the fun and the sun and for that day, all was good in our world.

As days turned into weeks and cabin fever set in, a nurse purchased plants and fertilizer, threw on overalls and helped get the garden going. Digging in the dirt made our residents feel alive again. Watching everything grow gave them purpose and hope.

It was a nurse who jumped in and helped make s'mores around a makeshift campfire. Stories

about long-ago camping trips were shared and everyone left with a warm heart and a warm belly.

With residents wondering if the lockdown would ever end, a group of nurses brought in a menagerie of animals. Residents enjoyed chickens and ducks and bunnies, even a goat. It was the most fun they'd had in a long time, and we've got the pictures to prove it!

When everyone needed a laugh, nurses threw together costumes, wigs, and silly hats, dancing into residents' rooms and coaxing all to join in. After all the medicine was given and blood sugars recorded, they headed out to the floor and carried on like they didn't have a care in the world.

It was a nurse who had to inform one resident after another that they had tested positive for COVID-19. She got onto her knees, down on their level, struggling to come up with the answer to the question, "Am I going to make it?"

When residents were living their final moments during lockdown, nurses stood around their beds, holding their hands and singing their favorite hymns.

Thank you, Florence Hand Home nurses, for all that you do, and all that you are! ■

CNA PATHWAY PROGRAM

## Nursing Assistant training program off to a great start

Wellstar began the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Pathway Program in November 2020 and has served almost 200 team members in its first year. This program created a pathway to healthcare using an entry-level role into the practice setting. The CNA Pathway Program is available to qualified team members and external hires seeking a career pathway into a clinical position. The program is in partnership with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and Kennesaw State University, using a regional approach to support our local facilities. We use an apprenticeship model in which students are employed by Wellstar while learning and earning their certification and education. ■

"I always had an interest in studying to be a Certified Nurse Assistant, but I could not afford to do so. When I heard about this program, I had to grab the opportunity to pursue my dream... and I am so willing to learn more. Thank you so much."

Love G.

Previously EVS Tech moved to Care Partner role at Wellstar Paulding Hospital



### Academic Partners

 **Chattahoochee**  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
PROGRAM DURATION: 5 weeks

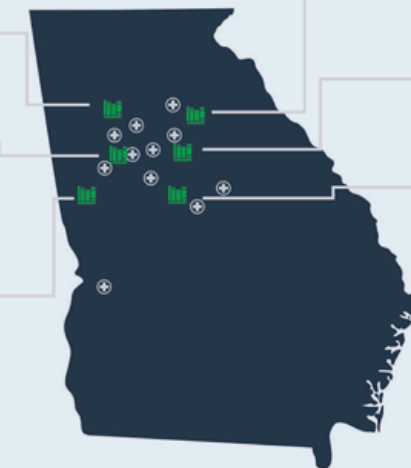
 **DELTA STATE**  
UNIVERSITY  
PROGRAM DURATION: 6 weeks

 **WEST GEORGIA**  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
PROGRAM DURATION: 7.5 weeks

 **KENNESAW STATE**  
UNIVERSITY  
PROGRAM DURATION: 6 weeks

 **GEORGIA**  
PIEDMONT  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
PROGRAM DURATION: 8 weeks

 **SOUTHERN**  
CRESCENT  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
PROGRAM DURATION: 6 weeks







PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:  
**SHARED LEADERSHIP**

Embracing shared leadership fosters a culture that is rooted in team member engagement, collaboration, and trust, resulting in an enriched work environment that promotes nursing excellence at all levels of practice. By adopting the principal tenets of equity, partnership, accountability, and ownership, our nurses are empowered to influence their professional practice through our Wellstar Model across the continuum of care. Performance excellence is attainable through a consistent and thoughtful focus on caregiver wellness, coupled with an emphasis on the appropriate allocation of resources and support to achieve both clinical and financial objectives.



WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL  
**Shared Leadership scores successes**

**At Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital’s Ambulatory and Endoscopy Departments, the Shared Leadership Unit Council has had a productive year, with several significant achievements. Among these are enhancements to the preoperative assessment testing areas, a reduction in procedure delays in the Ambulatory and Endoscopy Departments, and overall facility improvement.**

Preoperative assessment rooms were in desperate need of changes to ease workflow. There was no consistency of equipment or forms among the three rooms, which meant nurses wasted valuable time hunting things down from one room to the next. Following the council’s effort to standardize the rooms, all now have the same equipment, with paperwork in the same location (no more wasted time!). A new fax machine was purchased and installed in the assessment room that was missing one, further increasing productivity and efficiency.

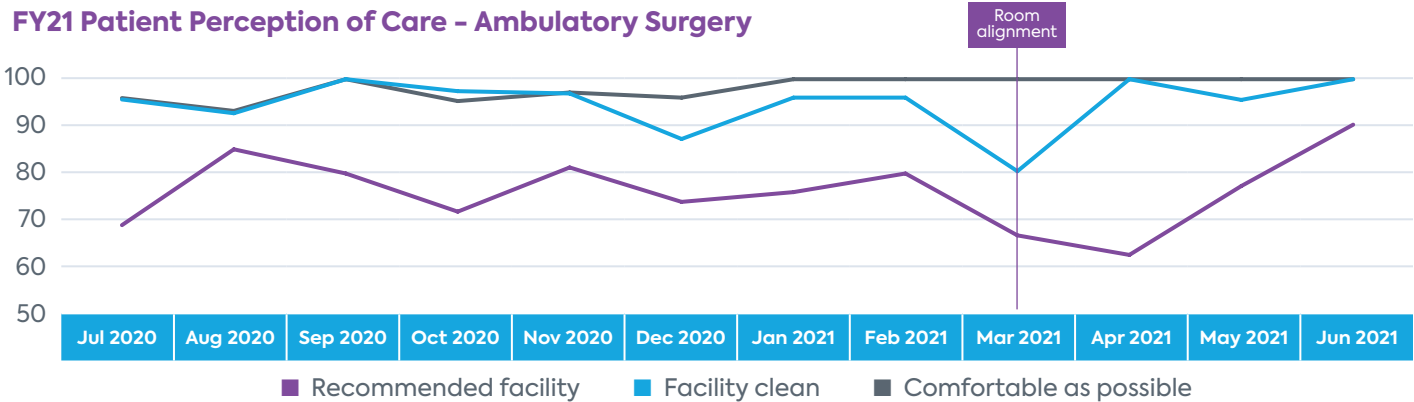
Procedure delays have been an ongoing concern in the Endoscopy Department. On multiple occasions, patients scheduled for procedures were either not given their colonoscopy prep on time, blood thinners were not being held, or beta blockers were not being given by the floor nurses. Members of the council developed a plan to address the issues. Endo nurses worked with the nurse educator and assistant floor managers to devise a floor nurse checklist. Also, the Endo

team now rounds on patients the day before each procedure to ensure that floor nurses have completed all necessary steps.

Team members submitted a number of excellent suggestions for increasing patient satisfaction scores. Several of these were implemented, including installing new phones and replacing outdated artwork in the rooms. New bedside tables were ordered for patient rooms as well. A trial of education boards in patient rooms with information on what to expect during and after surgery was conducted. Feedback led to a permanent board design that will be installed in all patient rooms. The council is also working on a needed voicemail system for the department.

The Spalding Regional Shared Leadership Unit Council takes pride in knowing that their work is leading to increased satisfaction for patients, as well as for nurses in the Ambulatory and Endoscopy Departments. ■

**FY21 Patient Perception of Care - Ambulatory Surgery**





## Labor and delivery nursing project

From Wellstar Health System Dianna Riquelme (educator)

I wanted to share with you a creative approach in which our department is honoring newest additions to the Labor and Delivery Nursing team. In all honesty, I cannot say that this is an original idea of mine. I came across it on Facebook and thought how wonderful it would be to adopt it.

The glass jar is to contain any delivery managed by the new Labor and Delivery Nurse once she completes orientation. The nurse must be a newly graduated one or a nurse that is transitioning from another specialty. She fills the jar so that in time she can reflect on the lives she has touched and how far along she has come, especially when shifts can be difficult and stressful. This visual helps build self-esteem and confidence. It also honors her journey and reminds her that she can do anything and pursue more in her career.

I hope this helps other Educators and Leaders find ways to honor, thank, and encourage their newer nurses. ■



## Video highlights shared experiences

**The pandemic brought unprecedented challenges for clinical nurses in coping with the unknown while providing patient care.**

With the surge in COVID-19 patients, nurses, including those on Wellstar Kennestone Hospital's 7B unit, had notably less time for self-care. Members of the unit's shared leadership team, along with members of the newly created communications committee and the employee experience committee, came up with the idea of a spirit-lifting video.

The [production](#), which debuted on Facebook and received dozens of likes and comments of appreciation, features 7BW staff on both shifts. Nurses, along with other team members (cardiac rehab, dietary, hospitalist, and care coordination), are shown checking charts, entering patient rooms, donning PPE, making and drinking (lots of!) coffee, consulting with physicians, bringing in takeout food, and occasionally mugging for the camera. As each staff member appears on video, her or his name appears on the screen. Cheerful background music and skillful editing make for an upbeat video, which is just what was needed in the midst of such difficult duty.

The team found other ways to lift spirits, including fun group outings. The result has been increased team camaraderie and solidarity as a work family. ■



## Shorter stays, other efficiencies achieved

**A commitment by Shared Leadership and a focus on ambitious goals paid off this year at Wellstar Atlanta Medical Center Downtown. Implementation of interdisciplinary rounds (IDR) on 8 Tower contributed to a drop in length of stay from 4.13 to 3.90 days, a decline of nearly a quarter of a day. Also, Shared Leadership implemented a report sheet completed by night-shift nurses and used during report-out for the next shift nurse.**

Other improvements involved assigned times for day-shift nurses to conduct IDR and to remain standing, rather than sitting, during rounds. As a result of these changes, IDR reports on 8 Tower were completed in under 30 minutes for all patients.

On September 1, 2021, AMC Downtown launched an 18-bed Trauma ICU (TICU) in collaboration with the AMC Downtown Trauma Department. The collaboration brings needed services to downtown and the surrounding community. As part of the launch, 26 RNs are participating in specialized education and training in TCAR, TNCC, and standards of care for certain traumatic injuries. Trauma Medical Director Katherine Kohler, M.D., and her team have been instrumental

in helping ensure the trauma nurses stay abreast of the latest and best evidence-based trauma practice.

Also in September, AMC Downtown opened the Trauma Intermediate Care Unit (TIMCU). This unit treats patients who meet the need for specialized trauma care, but do not require the services of the Trauma ICU. The department is staffed with seven RNs who have completed extensive training in care and quality outcomes of the traumatic patient. Collaborating with the trauma team and ancillary departments, AMC Downtown's Critical Care nurses improve the life and health of the community by constantly pursuing the best patient outcomes. ■



**30%**  
reduction in falls  
from FY20 with the help  
of 4T smart beds

**198**  
days  
CLABSI-free

**62**  
days  
CAUTI-free

**221**  
days  
HAPI-free



WELLSTAR MEDICAL GROUP

## WMG welcomes the first cohort of Practical Nurse externs

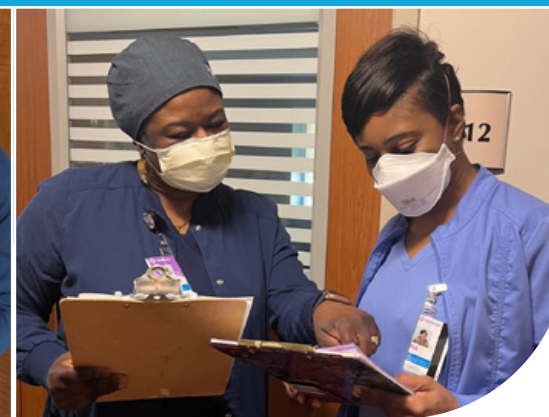
**In December 2021, the inaugural cohort of Practical Nurse externs joined the Wellstar Medical Group. The cohort consists of 12 practical nursing students from Chattahoochee Technical College, Dalton State College, and West Georgia Technical College.**

The goal of the Practical Nurse Extern Program is to bridge the gap between education and entry to practice by exposing the externs to the various ambulatory care specialties and developing their clinical and critical thinking skills as they learn and acclimate to the role of the practical nurse in this care setting. Practical Nurse students enter the program with 75+ hours of clinical experience and are prepared to provide direct patient care under the supervision of a licensed nurse who serves as preceptor and mentor for the duration of their program.

The Practical Nurse Extern Program boasts a comprehensive, evidence-based training curriculum developed by our ambulatory nurse leaders and nurse educators. Externs graduate the nine-month program with improved self-confidence, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills and, most importantly, are better equipped to enter the workforce as a Licensed Practical Nurse. ■

“I think that this program is awesome! I really enjoy the practice and location that I am placed at. My nursing supervisor is a wealth of knowledge and I have learned so much from her in such a short period of time. The nurses and the CNAs are all helpful and willing to step in whenever. I am honestly impressed by the overall culture. Everyone has great customer service skills, and you can tell that the patients are really cared for. My favorite part is being able to interact with the patients. Every day that I have worked, I have been able to check-off on something new from my competencies assessment. Thank you again for this opportunity.”

**Keonshé Anderson**  
Practical Nurse Extern



WELLSTAR COBB HOSPITAL

## Communication tool finds new purpose for RN and CP teams

**Wellstar Cobb Hospital use evidence-based best practice to provide safe and effective care for their patients. One example of an innovative care-improvement idea was the development of a RN-CP Brief and Debrief.**

This idea was born during a hospital Clinical Practice Council meeting. This group is comprised of front-line RNs who represent each inpatient unit at Wellstar Cobb Hospital. Our Manager of Patient Safety, Julie LaFontaine MSN, RN, CNL, presented trends in reported safety events. Several of the misses in care or safety events centered on communication. It appeared that while nurses give handoff to each other, and care partners give report to each other, there was not a standard opportunity for the oncoming RN and CP to review their shared assignments.

Upon review and discussion with our Shared Leadership group, the idea arose to create a tool for acute care units. This tool, the RN-CP Brief/Debrief, calls for a meeting in the beginning of the shift with the RN and CP to review pertinent clinical and safety information about each patient they share. Items like fall risk, diet preferences, tests being done that shift, how often blood sugars are to be checked, patient level of awareness, and who would be covering bath and linen change for this shift were all addressed. As the day progressed, the RN and CP would meet again towards the end of the shift to ensure all

care was complete and patient preferences were met. This last step is important because while the RN and CP work as a team, the RN holds a license which holds her ultimately responsible for all care delivered. This was a large part of the discussion in creating this tool.

The Shared Leadership group took the tool back to their units for a test run. Because this tool was created by front-line RN unit leaders' input, the peers on the unit had trust that the tool considered their workflow, unit acuity, and care specifics. They got feedback from their teams on what worked, what needed to be improved, and format. Some small tweaks were made to the content and the staff requested double-sided copies. This was great feedback and improvement suggestions from the team that will be front-line users of this tool. The use of similar standardized RN to RN communication tools is supported in literature, but there was not a template or one specific to RN and CP. The tool is in use now in the acute care units, and the team is waiting to review trends in safety issues as well as trends in how patients perceive the communication within the Healthcare Team. ■





PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

## EXEMPLARY PRACTICE

With exemplary practice, Wellstar nurses are positioned as national leaders in the nursing profession. Each team member and practice group has the goal of providing the highest standard of care to all patients. By empowering innovation through collaboration, our nurses are afforded the opportunity to continuously monitor and improve their professional practice and the outcomes of our patients.



WELLSTAR PAULDING HOSPITAL

## Paulding ED shines bright with national Lantern Award

**Wellstar Paulding Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) received the 2021 Lantern Award from the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) for exceptional and innovative performance in leadership, practice, education, advocacy, and research.**



The award recognizes success in incorporating evidence-based practice and innovation in emergency care, as well as a commitment to quality, safety, and a healthy work environment.

The Paulding ED is the first within Wellstar, and the first in Georgia, to receive this prestigious award for adult and pediatric patients. Led by David Weih, MHA, RN, CEN, Director of Outpatient Services, and Alicia Allen, MSN, RN, CEN, Nurse Manager of Emergency Services, the team collaborated to prepare the challenging application. ED staff members and physicians wrote to various required standards, highlighting accomplishments by the WPH ED Shared Leadership team, personal experiences in the ED, and the role of several initiatives on improving patient outcomes and team member satisfaction.

Among efforts highlighted was team support of a workflow redesign in the ED's Fast Track/Joint Evaluation Team (JET) area. Clinical nurses and interprofessional team members partnered in process and layout redesign of this space to ensure safe practice, efficiency in providing care, and improved patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes.

The resulting changes gave nurses more autonomy, while improving the patient experience. Following two improvement PDSA cycles in the JET area, patient satisfaction for the Likelihood to Recommend score increased by 12% over eight months. The Left Without Being Seen percentage decreased by 64% over a nine-month period.

The Lantern Award conveys to patients, families, the community, the state of Georgia, and the nation that excellence is valued and that they can expect exceptional care from the Paulding Hospital Emergency Department. Congratulations to the team on this prestigious award! ■







Left to right:

Dr. Grant Major (Surgeon)

Nicole Gilbert, RN (Charge Nurse Periop)

Jessica Siggers, RN (5th Floor)

James Thompson (Nominee)

Elizabeth Ellis, RN (OR)

Jessica Harrill, RN (Patient Flow Coordinator Periop)

Lindsey Perkins, RN (Manager, Surgical Services)

WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

## Grateful patient inspires group DAISY Award

**As nurses know well, it takes a village to deliver the best patient care. And that's exactly what Hogansville resident James Thompson experienced during a routine hernia repair procedure at Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center.**

Thompson credits nurses from the OR, ICU, and 5th floor with saving his life when unexpected challenges arose during his time in recovery. Their extraordinary effort earned them the DAISY Team award, the first time a group of nurses has received this prestigious recognition. The following is Thompson's story in his own words.

"I came into the hospital on January 1 to have my hernia repaired by Dr. Grant Major. I was told that after a few hours in recovery I should be well enough to go home. I don't remember much about the surgery, but I do remember waking up in the ICU and learning that great nurses and doctors had saved my life when I developed breathing trouble in the recovery room.

"The nurses who came to my aid included Jessica Harrill RN, Elizabeth Ellis RN, Cindy Huckabee RN, Lindsey Perkins RN, and Marylois Calhoun RN. Dr. Nora Fine was the anesthesia doctor who placed a tube back in, which saved my life. I cannot say enough about the fine care I received. I don't

remember it, but the nurses let my fiancée come into the recovery room to see me and they were so nice to her.

"ICU nurse Cathy Porter took very good care of me. She made sure I was comfortable, and she stayed with me to make sure I got the tube out of my throat as soon as possible.

"Once I was stable, I was transferred to the fifth floor where I received very good care from nurse Jessica Siggers. Ms. Calhoun came up to let me know that everyone in surgery and recovery had been praying for me, and they were all so thankful that I was doing well!

"There are not enough words to tell the surgery, recovery, and ICU teams how thankful I am for all they did for me. I tell everyone that we have the best nurses and doctors right here at West Georgia, and that the reason I am alive is because of the care I received. I will never forget this event, and I hope that the nurses and doctors know in some small way how I appreciate every one of them." ■

WELLSTAR DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

## Supporting our nurses with a culture of care

**As part of the process of becoming the first Wellstar facility to achieve the prestigious ANCC Pathway to Excellence nursing designation in 2020, Douglas Hospital documented its commitment to provide a healthy work environment by focusing on shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, wellbeing, and professional development.**

During the pandemic, honoring the voice of the nurse and maintaining a culture of caring remained top priorities. The effects of COVID-19 on nurses—burnout, compassion fatigue, and reduced wellbeing—have been documented in the professional literature and have been the subject of much attention.

To support staff in this period of high acuity and high census, the leadership team rounded on team members, providing snacks and offering appreciation for their tireless efforts. However, there was still a sense that more could be done. Feedback from the nurses was key to understanding how to deliver that support.

In March 2021, the hospital's Wellbeing Committee was formed under the direction of Allison Blank, MSN, RN, Executive Director of Nursing Acute Care

and Women's Center. The goal was to develop activities and modify work environments to support the health, morale, and overall wellbeing of employees. The committee, which included nurses from each unit, was tasked with planning events, implementing wellness activities, and communicating wellness information and opportunities.

One of the first actions was to place "idea boxes" on each unit to gather input from the nursing staff. That feedback, plus the contributions of committee members and support from the Wellstar Health System wellness team, has led to a variety of staff wellness activities. Though challenges remain, the dedication of team members to support one another during this historic pandemic and beyond is unwavering. ■





PEOPLECARE  
COMMUNITY HOSPICE

## Hospice nurse walks humbly with those she serves

The Wellstar Community Hospice team is made up of extraordinarily compassionate and caring members who have the unique privilege of being part of the death and dying process in a patient's own home. Among these is Sarah Mussellman, RN. Sarah has been a hospice nurse for three years and earned her CHPN and WOCN certifications to better meet the complex medical needs of her patients.

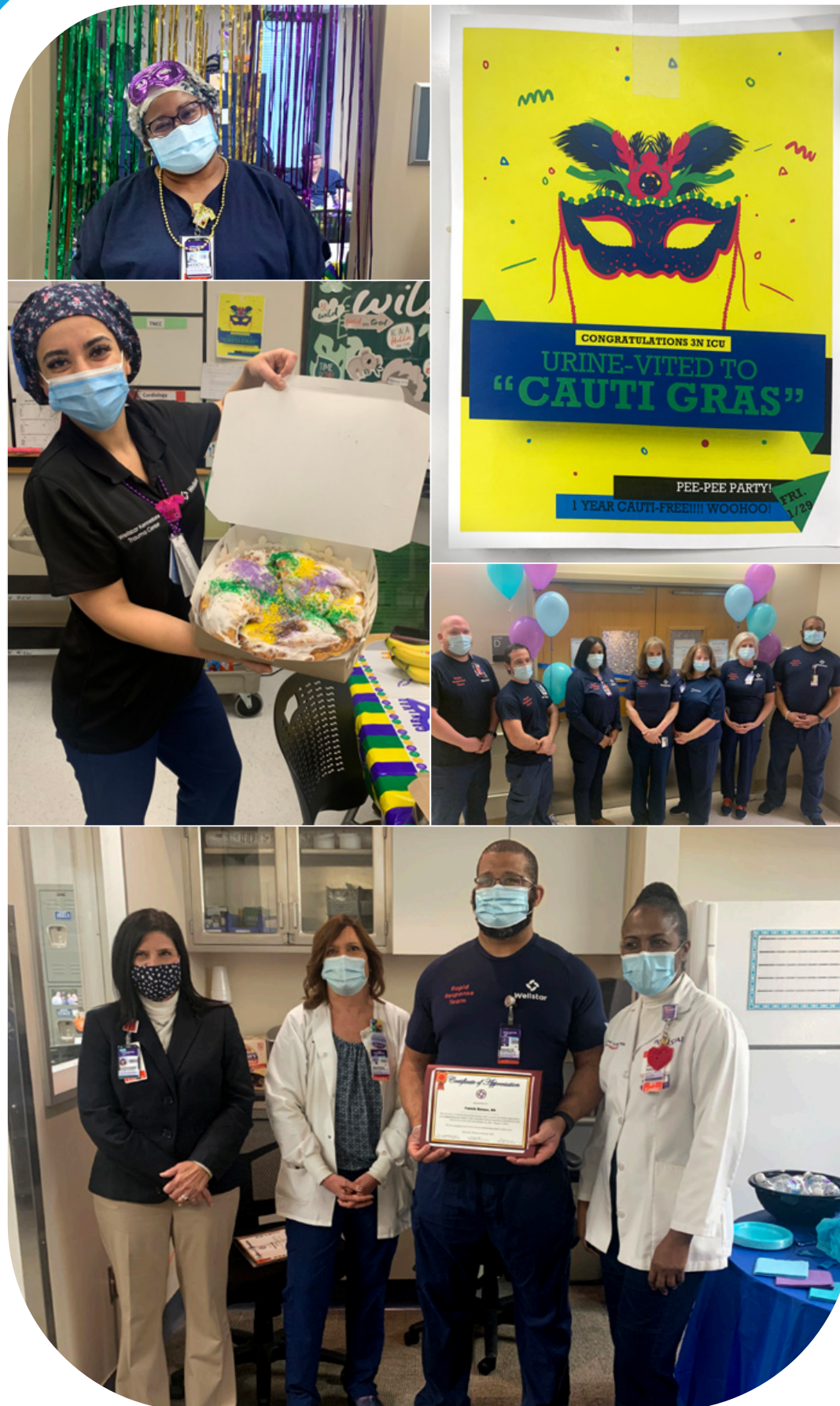


Sarah is consistently recognized by her colleagues as going above and beyond, helping an elderly couple set up grocery delivery services when they were no longer able to leave the house and helping a family without a credit card pay their electric bill online when their power was cut off. She's even been known to give haircuts to those no longer able to go to a salon or stop at the drive-through of a fast-food restaurant to bring a patient his favorite hamburger.

Recently, Sarah cared for a middle-aged man dying of cancer. The gentleman had battled mental illness and addiction most of his life. He faced a terminal diagnosis with little support from friends or family, but a strong determination to live out his days with dignity and independence. Sarah helped in many ways, including setting up a TV in his bedroom when he became too weak to climb stairs. She made sure he had enough food and fluids in his room so he didn't have to go downstairs to the kitchen.

When he began struggling to shower, he was mortified by the idea of someone helping him. Sarah made a trip to Home Depot where she bought a handheld shower head, installed it herself, and ordered a shower chair so he could bathe himself. When he began to have difficulty swallowing, Sarah stocked his bedside table with applesauce and other soft foods. She spent countless hours actively listening as the patient recalled the joys and regrets of 50-plus years. As he neared the end, the patient told staff, "Sarah is one of the only people I feel I can truly trust. I know she cares for me and will do what's best. She has always gone the extra mile for me."

Asked about the exemplary care she provides, Sarah noted, "So many of our patients' needs are not medical. I just look for opportunities to meet those needs while I provide the medical care they need for end of life. For me, it's about meeting them where they are on their journey without judgment." Sarah walks humbly alongside patients, delivering the respect and comfort that help them transition peacefully from this life to the next. ■



WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

## Welcome to CAUTI Gras!

**Catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) are among the most common hospital-acquired infections. CAUTIs are often associated with negative patient outcomes, including an increased length of stay.**

Nurses in the Trauma ICU at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital strive to create a culture of zero harm. With patient safety an essential part of that commitment, clinical nurses and nursing leadership gathered with the interdisciplinary team to address the hospital's CAUTI rate.

The solution was the creation of a workflow that includes a required second check before urine cultures are collected to ensure the culture is necessary. The team also partnered with providers to change ordering practices around cultures. And they instituted a daily focus on Foley removals using the nurse-driven protocol and encouraging the use of external options in interdisciplinary rounds.

As a result of these efforts, the team successfully achieved a CAUTI rate of zero and sustained it for over a year! They marked their success with a festive CAUTI Gras celebration. ■



FY21 CAUTI  
rate cut to  
**0%**



WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

## Team effort sends IUSS rate plummeting

**The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) advises that use of Immediate-Use Steam, or “Flash,” Sterilization be limited to situations where there is an urgent need and insufficient time to process an instrument by terminal sterilization. Decreasing or eliminating IUSS is one way to reduce the 300,000 surgical-site infections annually in the United States.**

In 2016, the Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center Sterile Processing Department (SPD) set a strategic, long-term goal of decreasing its IUSS rate from 5% to less than 2% over a five-year period. The objective was achieved in FY 2021 with a rate of 0.85%. “Each year we saw the rate decreasing,” noted SPD supervisor Brandon Walston. “Our plan was in place, and we met our goal!”

At West Georgia, typical reasons for using IUSS were fast-paced room turnover, too few instruments/trays on hand, intraoperative contamination, one-of-a-kind instruments, and the failure of vendors to deliver trays for cases in a timely manner.



The objective was achieved in FY 2021 with a rate of

**0.85%**

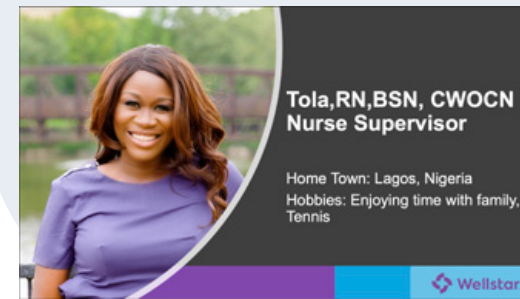
The initiative began by identifying gaps and implementing risk-reduction strategies. Staff members were educated on the need to decrease IUSS and policies to support the delivery of safe, quality patient care were clarified.

As well, the hospital revamped the SPD area, adding new washers and equipment to prevent sterilization delays. Next steps involved identifying and ordering accurate counts of instruments, equipment, and trays to ensure availability of resources.

The SPD implemented guidelines and an evidenced-based policy requiring that loaner trays and instruments be onsite for sterilization at West Georgia 24–48 hours prior to procedure. Among other actions, the department contracted with a surgical instrument repair service and began to require that any uncertified SPD tech hired obtain certification within 12 months.

Annual monitoring for adherence to the policy and guidelines includes review of cleaning, decontaminating, and assembling processes, as well as staff competency.

The West Georgia Medical Center Sterile Processing Department should be commended for achieving this ambitious and important goal. ■



Slides featured Wellstar team members to familiarize patients with the team.

WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON HOSPITAL

## “Welcome. We’re glad you’re here!”

**Again this year, patient and provider masking played a significant role in reducing the risk of infection from COVID-19 throughout Wellstar Health System. But masks also make it more difficult to connect with a healthcare provider, especially someone new.**

Nurses at the Wellstar North Fulton Wound Care Center addressed this problem by creating a warm and inviting video slide presentation for the Center’s waiting room. The video introduces the wound care team, with a color photo of each member, as well as their name, job description, home town, and hobbies.

The video has helped break the ice, permitting patients to “pre-connect” with team members so that once they are introduced, there is already a sense of familiarity. The result is comments

from patients like, “Oh, I saw on the video. You’re from Florida. I am, too!” Or, “So you love scuba diving? I used to dive!” The video also highlights recognition and awards earned by the Center, confirming for patients that they will be cared for by knowledgeable, certified staff.

Wound care treatment can be difficult, even painful. The North Fulton Wound Care Center waiting room presentation has been an excellent way to convey warmth and connection. ■

### PEOPLECARE

WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL

## Professor and student are reunited

It was a typical busy day in the Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital Emergency Department. Nurse Sabrina Walden had just received her nurse-to-nurse report from the triage nurse regarding a new EMS arrival. The previous ED nurse was concerned about the possibility of confusion because the patient kept talking

about her studies while she was at the University of California, Berkeley.

Sabrina entered the room to discover that the patient was her favorite college professor! The woman had fallen that morning, fracturing her femur. Sabrina learned that the former professor now lived alone and had no

immediate family nearby. The patient expressed anxiety about the surgery, and Sabrina offered words of encouragement as she was taken to the OR. At the end of her 12-hour shift, Sabrina visited to check on the patient. The on-duty nurse told Sabrina that she had not been able to get the professor to eat.

Talking with her, Sabrina discovered that the reason she’d been unable to eat was that she needed her dentures! Sabrina left the room and headed straight for the patient’s home in Barnesville to retrieve the dentures and to gather items the woman would need when she transferred to a rehab facility.

The surgery and recovery were successful and Sabrina stayed in close touch. To this day, Sabrina continues to make house visits and accompanies her “favorite professor” to her appointments. She even surprised her with an early Christmas present of a manicure and pedicure!

With nurses stretched so thin during the pandemic, and clinical needs front and center, it can be easy to forget that simple acts of compassion and kindness can have the biggest impact on a patient’s recovery. Sabrina Walden lives this truth, which makes her a most deserving DAISY Award recipient. ■





PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

## TEAMWORK

Through teamwork, communication, and interdisciplinary planning of care, Wellstar nurses deliver safe, high-quality healthcare. Nurses at all levels are involved in decision making, which enhances collegiality among team members. An engaged team that shares ideas and best practices is best suited to provide exceptional patient care.



WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

## Pronation therapy: struggles and triumphs in a 'COVID ICU'

**With the onset of COVID-19, the Wellstar Kennestone Hospital 4North Medical Intensive Care/ECMO Unit quickly transitioned to the "COVID ICU."**

Patients with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) are in some cases placed in a prone position as a supplemental strategy; this has become a gold standard for COVID care. Manual prone positioning, infrequently used in the unit previously, became the norm on the repurposed unit.

The clinical team, educator, and leadership partnered to develop a process to efficiently move team members from novice to expert in manual prone positioning. A video and training checklist were created, followed by an evidence-based order set establishing a protocol for manual proning with respect to the clinical condition of the patient.

The ICU team led an interdisciplinary effort to proactively protect patients from developing proning-related pressure injuries. And a practice change was adopted to ensure the presence of additional team members to protect the patient's airway during bedside radiology procedures.

Completion of proning education, implementation of the order set, and multiple opportunities for practice significantly raised the confidence level of ICU nurses. Incidence of pressure injuries, a common complication from proning, decreased and is lower when compared with published data. No additional unplanned extubation has occurred during bedside imaging, and knowledge of manual pronation procedures has been shared with other Wellstar ICUs. ■



Employee of the Month recipients were awarded plaques from 4North leadership team.



WELLSTAR PAULDING HOSPITAL

## Nurse volunteers reach out to help the community

**At Wellstar Paulding Hospital, the motto *Neighbors Caring for Neighbors* is lived daily, from the bedside to the community. It is demonstrated through advocacy, caring for underserved populations, and supporting the health and nutrition needs of Paulding County.**

The Wellstar Community Health Needs Assessment Report identified priority needs for the county, including access to appropriate care and chronic disease management. A two-part strategy addressing partnerships and a sustainable infrastructure was implemented.

One strategy identified to improve community health was to address food insecurity. Wellstar Paulding Hospital nurses and interprofessional partners collaborated on numerous occasions to increase access to needed food. Partnering with Helping Hands of Paulding County, the hospital provided

2,000 pounds of non-perishable food for distribution to community members. As well, Paulding Hospital partnered with New Season Church and Goodr, a hunger relief organization, to feed area families in need.

Community education and outreach provide an opportunity for volunteerism. By volunteering

at CareLink of Northwest Georgia, a local healthcare clinic, Paulding nurses increased access to care for community members with little to no healthcare insurance. Nurse volunteers conducted intake screening and health assessments and provided education for acute and chronic diseases. As well, nurses serve on CareLink's board of directors, where they support service expansion and raise funds to support local CareLink operations.

In support of cancer survivors treated at Wellstar Paulding Hospital, nurses and other team members volunteered at the second annual National Cancer Survivors Day on June 6. This family event, led by Kellie Mitchell, BSN, RN, OCN, Oncology Nurse Navigator, provided education and community awareness. It was a day for celebrating cancer survivors—the true superheroes—and for inspiring those newly diagnosed. ■



# 2,000

pounds of non-perishable food distributed to community members



PEOPLECARE

WELLSTAR DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

## During times of grief, what can we do to support family and friends?

This was the question that nagged at Wendy Elliott, MSN, RN, manager of the Wellstar Douglas Hospital ICU, as she watched yet another family walk out of the unit following the death of a loved one. The family had become familiar to Wendy and other team members, and their despair was painful to watch.

Wendy felt sure that more could be done to help bereaved loved ones cope with their loss. She began researching and reaching out to others, including members of the Douglas Critical Care Collaborative, for ideas. One physician shared that when her own mother passed, she was gifted with a set of her mother's handprints taken by a nurse. The physician was able to share these with her own sons, which she said was quite meaningful.

Wendy also sought insight from her Unit Council and from Steven Lambert, Pastoral Care, and Allison Blank, Executive Director of Nursing-Acute Care and Women's Services. Allison told Wendy about a nonprofit known as Resolve Through Sharing® (RTS), which provides healthcare organizations with bereavement education.

Wendy learned that RTS produces grief packets and, with the support of her staff, ordered a number of these for the unit. Now when a patient dies, the bereavement packet is offered to the family member, along with a handprint of the patient. The initiative has been well received by family members, who especially cherish the handprints. Now, rather than leave alone and empty-handed, they are strengthened with guidance on navigating the grief process and a lasting memory of their loved one. ■



WELLSTAR WINDY HILL HOSPITAL

## Full court press leads to desired CAUTI reduction

**Patients in a long-term acute care setting are at higher risk of developing catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) due to their multiple co-morbidities, prolonged hospitalization, and complex medical conditions.**

In June 2017, Wellstar Windy Hill Hospital's Progressive Care Unit (PCU) reported 17 CAUTIs for the year, prompting staff to take action to decrease that number.

Multiple teams, many interdisciplinary, reviewed a variety of potential interventions. These included a two-person catheter insertion protocol, mid-huddle shift check-ins by charge nurses to ensure that peri-care was being performed twice a day, and use of an improved peri-wipe product. One of the more innovative ideas was to

give patients with an indwelling urinary catheter (IUC) cranberry juice twice a day, as research has shown that cranberry can help decrease the incidence of urinary tract infections (Maki et al., 2016).

While these initiatives yielded significant improvement in the CAUTI rate for PCU in 2019, the team concluded that to achieve even greater results, they would need to decrease use of IUCs. Upon review of the literature, it was determined that the best way forward was implementing an intermittent catheterization process.

This involved performing bladder scans on patients who had not voided after having their IUC removed and using that value to determine if intermittent catheterization was needed.

This process was repeated until the patient either resumed normal bladder function or the doctor determined the IUC should be replaced. Often, patients were able to regain normal function within a matter of days. This intervention led to a 34% reduction in catheter utilization days.



In March 2021, the PCU celebrated one year CAUTI free. It was a major achievement, given the high-risk patient population. The team continues to work on hard-wiring their CAUTI prevention interventions and finding additional ways to protect patients from the adverse effects of a catheter-associated UTI. ■

WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL

## One year CAUTI free!

Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital ICU team members have been diligent in reviewing indwelling urinary catheter necessity as part of daily IDRs and nurse-driven protocols. This year, the team initiated a process to remove urinary catheters prior to transfer out of the ICU. This has resulted in zero CAUTIs for FY21, despite increased patient acuity during the pandemic.

The process had a tremendous impact on inpatient units as well. From the fourth quarter of 2020 through the second quarter of 2021, Spalding's three inpatient units reported zero CAUTIs. ■



Members of the Windy Hill interdisciplinary team: Christin Buckelew Pharm.D., BCPS; Hina Mehmood Pharm.D., BCPS; Nicholas Phillips Pharm. D., BCPS, BCIDP; Sarah Meffert MSN, RN, CNL, CCRN-K; Steve Greene Pharm. D., BCPS

WELLSTAR WINDY HILL HOSPITAL

## Pilot program seeks to vaccinate admitted patients

**When the first COVID-19 vaccine became available, Wellstar, like other health care organizations, began identifying ways to get it to as many people as possible.**

As vaccine efforts continued into 2021, the System acknowledged the need to provide the vaccine to its patients. After assessing the patient populations of all facilities, Wellstar Windy Hill Hospital was identified as an ideal location for an inpatient vaccine pilot project.

Patients at Windy Hill Hospital have multiple co-morbidities, and their hospitalization—typically longer than at other Wellstar

sites—provided an opportunity to receive both doses while still admitted. An interprofessional team was assembled to begin to build a process for an inpatient COVID vaccination process at Windy Hill.

Under the pilot, which went live March 29, 2021, with the Pfizer vaccine, appropriate patients are screened on admission to determine suitability for the vaccine and willingness to receive it. Following screening and consent by the nurse, the physician advises pharmacy. Pharmacy tracks the patients and once there is a cohort of six, they are re-assessed to ensure medical stability prior to vaccination. If all patients are deemed fit, the vaccine is administered by

nursing. In turn, nursing monitors any adverse reactions and reports them to the physician, notes them in the patient's chart, and reports them in the electronic reporting system.

As of the end of July 2021, 99 patients were found eligible for the vaccine; 37 received at least the first dose and four received both doses. Four medication occurrences were reported, three related to incorrect screenings and one due to an incorrect pharmacy consult. There were no adverse reactions reported. Windy Hill Hospital staff continue to assess patients for vaccination and educate them on the importance of getting their shots. ■



# West Georgia refreshes ICU ‘Liberation’ effort

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center ICU, like hospitals across the country, saw an increase in mechanically ventilated patients. Leaders concluded it was time to reboot an effort at “ICU liberation” first launched in 2015.

The initiative by the Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) seeks to liberate patients from the harmful effects of pain, agitation/sedation, delirium, immobility, and sleep disruption (PADIS) in the intensive-care setting. Its goal is to improve patient outcomes after an ICU stay and reduce the risk of long-term consequences. Studies show that implementing ventilator weaning protocols, maintaining light levels of sedation, and preventing and managing delirium can improve patient outcomes, notably a 68% reduction in hospital death within 7 days and a 46% reduction in ICU

readmissions. Early mobilization and family engagement also play a key role in reducing long- and short-term consequences of an ICU stay. Revisiting the effort was timely, as the West Georgia ICU is in the initial phase of its Journey to Excellence and Beacon Award application. In April 2021, the liberation refresh kicked off with an introductory session co-led by Dr. Salman Fidahussein, a specialist in Critical Care and Pulmonary Medicine, and Lindsay Johnson, an APRN working in the ICU. Additional sessions, scheduled through January 2022, are open to anyone interested in

learning more about liberation, critical care, managing sedation and ventilation, and the ABCDEF Bundle guidelines. ICU liberation involves shifting an ICU’s philosophy and culture. An interdisciplinary team of physicians, advanced practice practitioners, registered nurses, care partners, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, dieticians, and pharmacists works to mitigate downstream disabilities caused by illnesses related to an ICU admission. ■

Source: Caring for Critically Ill Patients with the ABCDEF Bundle: Results of the ICU Liberation Collaborative in Over 15,000 Adults. *Pun, Crit Care Med, 2019;47:3-14.*



ICU Liberation ABCDEF Bundle objectives include:

- Optimize pain management
  - Break the cycle of deep sedation and prolonged mechanical ventilation
  - Reduce the incidence and duration of ICU delirium
  - Improve short- and long-term ICU patient outcomes
  - Reduce healthcare costs
- A: Assess, Prevent and Manage Pain  
B: Both SATs and SBTs  
C: Choice of Sedation  
D: Delirium – Assess, Prevent and Manage  
E: Early Mobility and Exercise  
F: Family Engagement and Empowerment



PEOPLECARE  
WELLSTAR COBB HOSPITAL

# Celebrating diversity through food and culture

To mark 2021 Nurses Week, the Wellstar Cobb Hospital 2N cardiac telemetry staff held a festive international potluck to celebrate the 14 nationalities of the unit’s caregivers. Team members brought special dishes representative of their countries and wore national colors and traditional dress.

The event was organized by the Special Events Club of the unit’s Shared Governance (Guylene Thelusme and Jackie Walker) and spearheaded by Unit Manager Valena Ferrier, who calls 2N “a melting pot of caregivers.”

The venue was decorated beautifully with flags of each country. International staff offered a brief presentation on their country and national dish. The team learned that Guylene, Sylvie, and Marlene are from Haiti. Chinelo hails from Nigeria, where hundreds of languages are spoken. Valena and Jackie are from Jamaica, where a traditional dish is bun and cheese. CNL Lynita is from Kansas City, Missouri, known for barbecue and jazz.

A special Barbados flag was ordered for Joy Wharton, one of the unit’s hardest working charge nurses. Before eating, the team came together in a circle and Guylene blessed the food in French Creole. The feast featured dishes from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Barbados, Eritrea, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Philippines, Sierra Leone, and the USA. Dancing followed.

The international potluck was a wonderful way to strengthen team member bonds. The unit staff is already looking forward to next year’s event. ■





PEOPLECARE  
WELLSTAR COBB HOSPITAL

## Caring compassionately, practicing professionally

In early December 2021, an infant in cardiac arrest arrived at the Wellstar Cobb Hospital (WCH) Emergency Department by ambulance. A child in distress always heightens the team's response. The pediatric code team quickly assembled and began providing lifesaving care to this patient. Although all efforts were made, the child did not survive. When the mother arrived, Ashley Lancaster, BSN, RN, knew this would be one of the hardest assignments she had to perform. Her training and experience had served to prepare her for the sensitive approach to the mother. Ashley assisted the mother to the family room and stayed with her as the pediatrician delivered the news. The mother quickly fell to the floor crying. This is the point where Ashley's empathy and compassion allowed her to comfort the mother in a way that was sensitive, caring, and supportive.

Ashley stayed with the mother until another family member arrived. As Ashley drew upon her skill of caring for the whole patient and family, she knew the key to easing the mother's distress. By incorporating all the components of holistic care, Ashley was able to attend to the family's mind-body-spirit-emotion-energy-environment needs. Comforting a grieving family is one of the most difficult tasks a nurse must perform. Ashley was able to assess the fluidity of this encounter and adjust her care delivery to meet the needs of the family. She obtained the child's footprints and had a special teddy bear to give to the mother and family. Ashley told the mother to squeeze the teddy bear and sit for as long as she needed.

The mother took her time and after a few moments, she stood up and hugged Ashley and thanked her for everything she had done.

Ashley showed the depth of care and empathy a nurse must exhibit. She was able to balance the emergency response clinical care with a compassionate spirit as she provided holistic treatment for the family. ■



WELLSTAR MEDICAL GROUP

## Wellstar COVID Response Team, providing PeopleCare for our team members

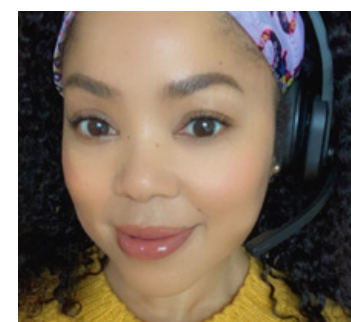
**The past two years have been challenging for everyone. It has been especially challenging for our Wellstar team members who contracted COVID.**

Meet the faces behind the gentle and reassuring voices at the other end of the phone line. They are the faces of our COVID Response Team nurses who have supported our team members throughout the pandemic. The core team, led by Sheila Mueller, WMG Director of Nursing, consists of four registered nurses and an analyst who is a licensed practical nurse.

This Team's mission is to promptly identify our COVID-positive team members and provide telephonic support so they can be returned to their workplace as timely and safely as possible. The registered nurses provide nursing advice, healthcare navigation, and direction on who to contact for non-clinical questions related to COVID. Recovering employees have expressed how the frequent phone calls from the nurses made them feel valued as a Wellstar employee and provided a sense of security that they were not alone when at times they were experiencing some very severe and frightening symptoms.

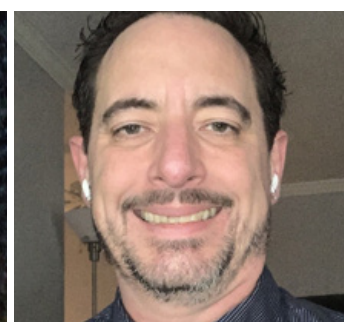
This team of nurses has managed through the multiple surges and has been nimble and adaptive with the changing CDC guidelines. The Omicron surge was particularly challenging with the high number of employees infected and the pivot from a 10-day quarantine to five days. They worked on weekends and evenings to keep pace with the number of positive employees during the surges, as they were committed to every employee hearing from a nurse within 24 hours of their positive test result. If that meant working a longer day, they were not missing one employee!

As the leader of this exceptional nursing team, Sheila Mueller states, "I am honored to have supported the system and its employees in this capacity over the past two years. I've been heartened as an employee's condition improves and saddened when they are experiencing worsening symptoms. I am proud of the team we have in place who share this dedication." ■



"It is a great honor to serve my fellow Wellstar team members during such an uncertain time!"

**Kayla Duncan, BSN, RN**  
Clinical Services, RN Triage



"It has been a truly humbling honor to be selected to serve my fellow Wellstar team members during this tremendously challenging period."

**Spencer T. Elrod, LPN, CNMT**  
Clinical Services, Data Analyst



"It is a pleasure to serve alongside my fellow colleagues as we take great care of our awesome Wellstar team members in their time of need, and facilitate their return to caring for our patients."

**Latoya Hines-Mighty, MSN, RN**  
Clinical Services, RN Triage



"It feels rewarding to provide the care, support, and advice for fellow employees during a great time of need."

**Audrey Marroquin, BSN, RN**  
Clinical Services, RN Triage





PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

# CREATIVE INNOVATIONS

Nursing practice and care should be based on evidence-based practice, research, and industry standards. Resources to obtain the most current information are readily available and used to guide better patient care. Continuous improvement methodologies encourage our nurses to be open minded to change, as well as foster creative and innovative solutions, resulting in excellence.



WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

# Mobile patient care app shows strong promise

**Designed for care team members on the go, the Epic Rover app allows users to document patient care and perform certain tasks from a mobile device, such as a smart phone, while at the point of care.**

The app, which was piloted at Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center earlier this year, saves time by eliminating the need to sign in and out of workstations. And it can be used in tight spaces where workstations are not always available. The device and the associated apps provide documentation tools, communication channels, and reference libraries in the palm of a team member’s hand.

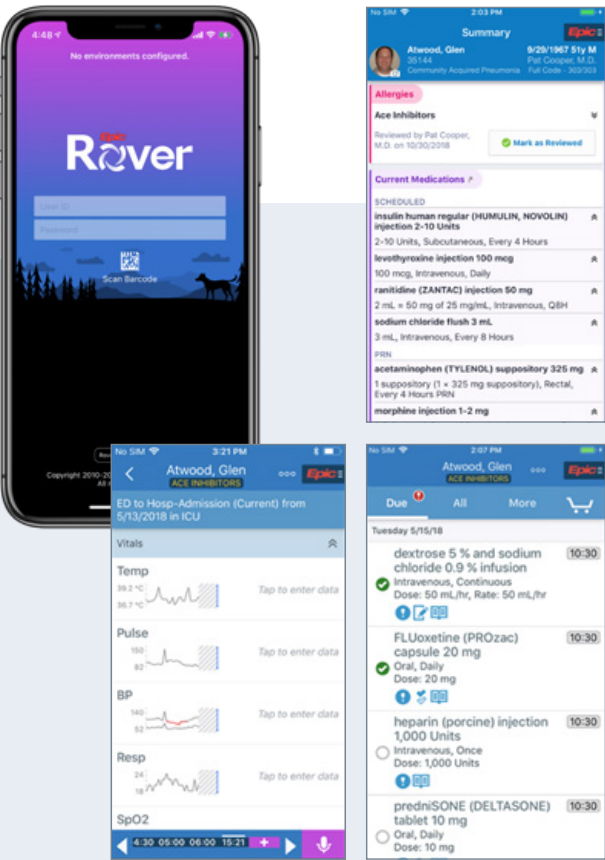
Wellstar West Georgia’s Rover pilot went live on April 19, 2021. The stated aim was to improve patient safety by increasing care team communication and response times, while untethering them from fixed computer assets. It seeks to improve caregiver mobility and the overall patient experience.

Rover displays relevant medication advisories at the point of care, supports recording of vital signs, and provides a clinical summary of allergies, labs, current medications, and intake/output. Clinicians can update administration details such as dose, route, or site. Nurses using Rover on a mobile device can quickly access Epic’s Nurse Brain and Worklist, allowing them to scan and administer medications and blood products, document assessments in flowsheets, and add or assess new or existing LDAs.

Additionally, some assessments allow users to securely capture and upload photos, facilitating wound care, for example. As an added staff

safety feature, ED mobile devices are equipped with a panic button that, when pressed, alerts security personnel. Other uses include notifying Environmental Services (EVS) or transporters when a room needs cleaning or a patient needs to be transported to another unit.

Results and lessons from the Rover pilot will be studied and used to roll out Rover to other facilities throughout the Wellstar system. ■



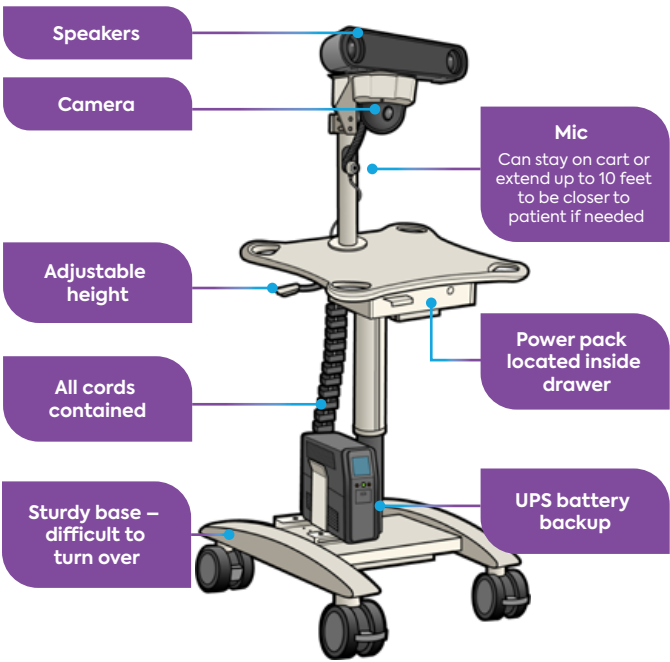


# ‘Telesitter’ monitoring to debut Systemwide

Wellstar patients and team members will mutually benefit from a technology-based alternative to traditional sitters in a time of high patient census and extraordinary staff demands.

In June, a Telesitter program was piloted at Wellstar Paulding and Kennestone hospitals. The digital monitoring system tracks in-room patient activity, alerting staff to problems or emergencies. The goal is to make the best use of Wellstar team member talent, while improving quality of care and patient safety.

Once a patient is identified as a candidate for telesitter services, a specialized cart outfitted with a camera, microphone, and speakers is placed in the room, providing the “eyes and ears” for a centralized Telesitter team. The system allows team members to zoom in and interact verbally with the patient. Patients who qualify include those at high fall risk and at low to medium risk for behavioral health. The monitoring station is located at a central site and can monitor patients across multiple facilities.



CREATIVE INNOVATIONS

Use of the equipment led to an increase in the traditional sitter ratios of 1:1 or 1:2 up to 1:10. The technology honors team members who had been filling traditional sitter roles, by permitting them to return to bedside.

Anticipated outcomes of this program, such as a reduction in falls and decreased use of restraints, could be detected within the first few months of using the new system. Additional, unexpected benefits included enhanced safety for team

members during the COVID-19 surge, a heightened sense of security for family members, and companionship for patients being monitored.

Partnering with local facility liaisons, the Telesitter has become a virtual, vital part of the patient care team model. Expansion of this program to Cobb and North Fulton hospitals is underway. Once fully implemented, the System will be able to offer virtual sitting for more than 200 patients at a time. ■

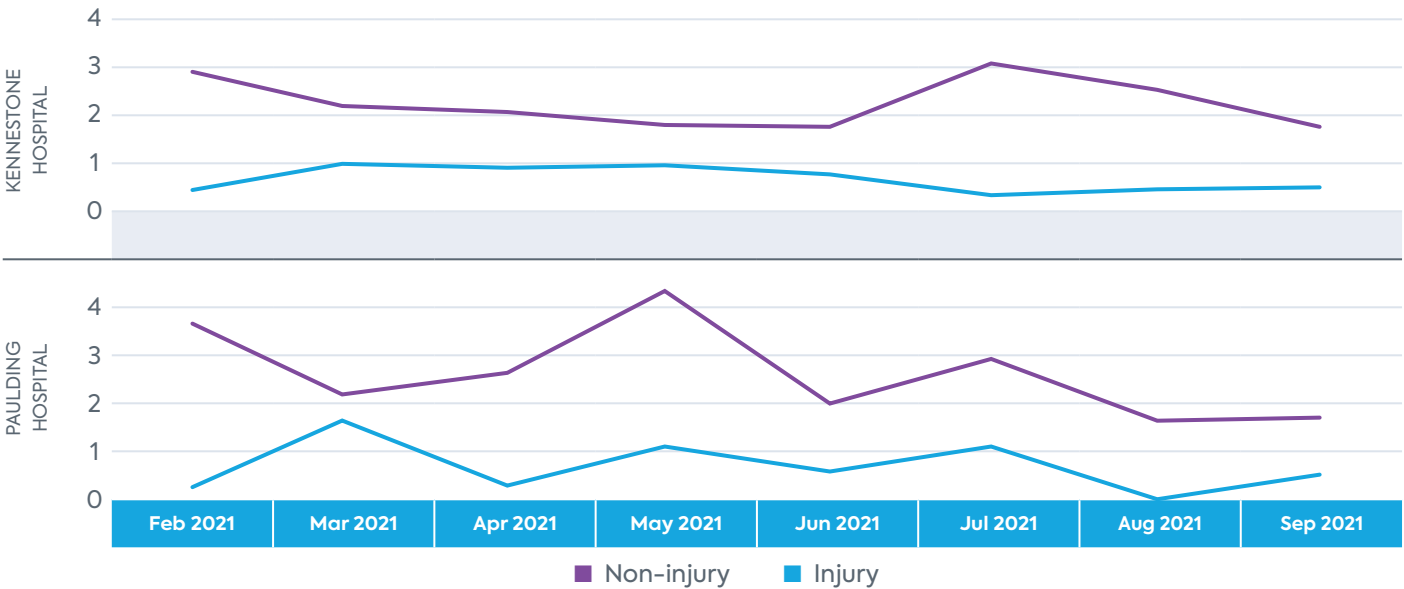
# Nurses step up in period of need

During the second COVID-19 influx during the summer of 2021, the Wellstar Home Health nursing team rose to the occasion with an unexpected opportunity to reduce potential hospitalizations at a time when hospitals were operating at surge.

Christine “Chris” Van Dyke, RN, quickly learned how to stand up an infusion clinic that would provide care to 85 patients. Though the clinic setting is not typical for Chris and her team, they shone under the guidance of Joy Peterson, Pharmacist, Tony Gallagher, Director of Noninvasive Cardiology, and others at Kennestone familiar with the process. Within a few days, they had gained the confidence to provide the monoclonal antibody to a group of COVID-positive patients who were clinically matched to receive the infusion, keeping them from being admitted to the hospital.

Though Chris and her team cared for these patients for only a few hours, they became like family, sharing personal experiences and bonding over the unique circumstances. Chris refused to allow these patients to feel alienated and worked to make a meaningful connection. The effort left the patients feeling extraordinarily grateful for both the infusion, and the relationship with a team of world-class nurses. The experience certainly transformed healthcare into PeopleCare for a group of deserving patients. ■

Fall Rate Trend





# Nurses give to local shelter

For the past two years, the Cobb Hospital Clinical Decision Unit (CDU) has supported residents of a local women and children’s shelter by donating purses filled with essential needs. In May of 2020, Cobb CDU donated 10 purses. This year, the unit more than doubled contributions!

During Nurses Week 2021, the team put together 25 purses for the shelter, with more than 100 pounds of food items and baby formula, and contributed four large crates of women’s and children’s clothing. Each purse included stroke prevention education materials as well, as strokes are increasingly targeting younger women. This community service project, inspired by Shared Leadership, has proven equally meaningful to Cobb CDU and to those served. ■

# Innovative new model to train nurses

**The Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital Emergency Department implemented a promising new national onboarding and orientation model in June 2021 for newly graduated, transitional, and experienced RNs.**

The refreshed process involves two eight-hour virtual sessions followed by an in-person simulation day. The hospital also adopted a new orientation approach, known as the Tiered Skills Acquisition Model (TSAM).

TSAM helps new nurses overcome barriers to practice by improving their skills. Rather than increase the patient load, the orientee takes a full patient assignment with preceptors, focusing on increasing nursing intervention skills from simple to complex. A current TSAM model for emergency services offers six tiers with a proposed targeted number of days to complete orientation. There is no time limit on how long a new hire will remain in a particular tier.

During orientation, the new nurse assumes increased responsibilities based on demonstrated competency. A preceptor working with the department educator can advance the orientee through the tiers. The number of orientation days can be easily modified to accommodate faster or slower learners. Two orientees at nearby Wellstar Sylvan Grove Hospital have completed the process and report feeling better equipped with the necessary skills and experience to provide the best patient care. TSAM has shown an increase in the number of patient encounters, length of orientation, and increased satisfaction with the overall orientation process. ■

# Nurse-driven protocol speeds diagnosis of brain hemorrhage

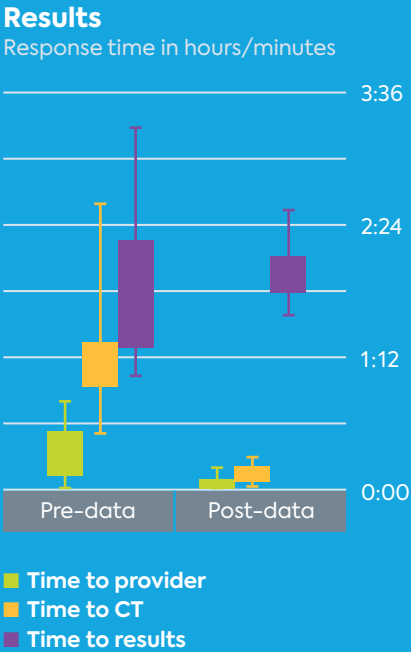
**When Wellstar Kennestone Hospital ED nurse and Trauma Coordinator Megan Dawson identified a missing protocol that could potentially save patient lives, she quickly jumped into action.**

The issue that attracted her notice was the lack of a process to expedite the diagnosing of intracerebral hemorrhage (ICH) in high-risk anticoagulated patients who do not meet trauma activation criteria, like intact mental status and lower mechanisms of injury, but show external signs of head trauma.

Megan responded by spear-heading creation of a Code Head Injury Protocol (CHIP) for patients taking anticoagulation or antiplatelet medications, not including exclusive aspirin, with visible signs of head trauma. The protocol set a target goal of reducing the time from ED arrival to CT scan to within 20 minutes 90% of the time to allow earlier identification of ICH.

In the eight months following implementation of the new protocol, 327 patients experienced a CHIP alert and 317 had arrival to CT start times of less than 20 minutes, achieving the target goal 97% of the time. The average door to CT time was reduced well below goal for an average of 8 minutes. Time to diagnosis also decreased to an average of 39 minutes, capturing 30 ICH diagnoses. Results and success of the new protocol were shared throughout the System and presented at national conferences.

Clinical nurses reported the process is easy to follow, has few steps, and does not require excessive resources. Collaboration among nursing, providers, and radiology was essential to the success of this innovative process. ■







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