



NURTURING THROUGH NURSING

2023 NURSING REPORT



Wellstar

More than healthcare. **PEOPLE CARE**

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

Deliver world-class
healthcare to every
person, every time.

WELLSTAR VALUES



We serve with
compassion.



We pursue
excellence.



We honor every
voice.

NURTURING THROUGH NURSING

As I look back on the past year, it is my great privilege and honor to recognize the amazing work of our Wellstar Health System nurses and care team members in the 2023 Nursing Report.

This year's report highlights many of our nurses' extraordinary accomplishments in advancing shared leadership, elevating professional development through education, fostering creative and innovative solutions resulting in better patient experience, delivering safe and high-quality care through teamwork and improving professional practice and patient outcomes through exemplary practice.

Our nurses continue to drive our work environment by creating innovative solutions to meet the needs of our patients and their families. The recognition, innovative ideas and awards featured throughout this year's reports are steadfast examples of their dedication to the communities we serve across Georgia.

I am proud to share the amazing stories reflecting Wellstar's values of serving with compassion, pursuing excellence and honoring every voice. When we as nurses come together, we can truly transform healthcare.



Susan M. Grant

Susan Grant, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN
Executive Vice President,
Chief Experience Officer
and Chief Nurse Executive
Wellstar Health System

WELLSTAR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE MODEL



Wellstar Heroes

Shared Leadership

Nurse navigator front and center in heart failure wins

WELLSTAR PAULDING MEDICAL CENTER

In 2021, Wellstar Paulding Medical Center experienced more than 700 acute heart failure (HF) patient readmissions. Today, Paulding is making significant progress in the fight against such readmissions, which contribute to mortality and are a financial burden to healthcare systems nationwide.

Much of the success is attributed to Heart Failure Nurse Navigator Holly Holtzclaw, BSN, RN, OCN. At the recommendation of Cardiovascular Services Director Jennifer Haney, MSN, RN, Holly was brought on and charged with guiding patients through their care plans, removing knowledge and resource barriers to self-care, and providing follow-up to help prevent deterioration requiring readmission.

The results have been exceptional. In the two-year period since her arrival, the hospital has seen a decrease of 36.5 percent in HF readmissions, accounting for an overall decrease in heart failure admissions.



Holly works to expand access to community and System resources such as affiliated

Palliative Care programs, HF clinics and low-income assistance. To meet current and anticipated needs of the heart failure patient population, she focuses on adherence to the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines heart failure prevention program. ■

“Having a dedicated heart failure navigator has truly made a positive difference in the lives of our patients.”

Jennifer Haney | Cardiovascular Services



Jennifer Haney (L) and Holly Holtzclaw (R)



“As Neonatal Nurses, we are able to ensure that our tiniest patients and their families have the education, skills and resources needed for that little baby to have appropriate quality of care.”

Melissa Brooks (L) and Kim Cook (R)
| Post Acute Services

Exemplary Practice

Caring for our tiniest patients at home

POST ACUTE SERVICES

While most neonatal nurses care for newborns in the hospital setting, two extraordinary Wellstar nurses, Kim Cook, RN and Melissa Brooks, RN provide care at patients’ homes.

They embody world-class care, through their compassion, their pursuit of excellence and by honoring the quiet voice of the tiniest of patients. And they are part of a legacy of community care for newborns that spans more than 30 years.

Delivering care at home is a unique experience. Every household and family are unique and the requirements and needs vary as well. During their visits, Kim and Melissa confirm that the newborn is safe, staying alert to early signs of complications and taking the appropriate action to ensure the newborn receives additional medical care, if needed.

A significant part of their duties involve parental teaching, through which Kim and Melissa develop relationships of trust with parents, grandparents and/or foster parents. They calm overwhelmed parents through kind words of encouragement and patience, while reassuring them and providing essential information about newborn care. These skilled and compassionate clinicians are truly making a difference in the lives of our tiniest patients and their caregivers during an exciting, yet often overwhelming time. ■

“I cannot say enough about this nurse and how she made us at peace. She listened to us and was honest about what was happening. She was empathetic through the entire experience and met the family’s needs.”

- Patient



Maggie Leprone | Critical Care Nurse

Teamwork

And the beat goes on—providing care in the midst of tragedy



WELLSTAR DOUGLAS MEDICAL CENTER

On July 17, 2022, a 35-year-old mother of 3 was admitted to the Wellstar Douglas Medical Center critical care unit after a near-drowning accident in her backyard. The patient’s neuro status on admission indicated a poor outcome for this patient.

The critical care team members, realizing that there would likely be a negative outcome, recognized the need not only to support and care for the patient, but also the need to care for the family. Immediately, the nursing staff identified a need to provide age-appropriate support to the patient’s 3 young children.

The patient’s nurse reached out and was connected to child life specialists at Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center who were able to provide information on how to have those difficult conversations with the children and bereavement resources. Critical Care Nurse, Maggie Leprone BSN, RN, took it upon herself to make sure the children had a way to remember their mother by obtaining Build-a-Bears and having a recording of their mother’s heartbeat placed in the bears. Maggie also made handprints for the family as a keepsake.

These and other efforts to help the patient and family transition to a peaceful passing were deeply appreciated. Days after the patient’s funeral, the family reached out to the critical care leader with praise and gratitude. They especially wanted to thank her nurse who provided all the bereavement resources for the children and nominated her for the coveted DAISY Award for extraordinary nurses. The work by Maggie and the rest of the team exemplified patient and family-centered care by identifying the needs of the patient and the family, recognizing our own limitations and maximizing resources to meet their needs. ■

Creative Innovations

Nurse battles food insecurity

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

One in nine Georgians is food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to adequate food for an active and healthy life. As part of Nurses' Month in May, Kennestone Chief Nursing Officer, Marianne Hatfield and her nursing team looked for ways to support the local community.

The goal was to provide healthy options to more than 100 people experiencing food insecurity. Goodr Mobile Grocery Store provides fresh food and shelf-stable goods at no cost to communities in need, allowing people to shop with dignity while also eliminating food waste.

During the four-hour drive-through event, more than 4,070 lbs. of food was distributed, as well as stroke and heart health educational materials. The hope is to secure funding for similar events in the future. ■



4,070 lbs
of food along with heart health educational materials were distributed

“Partnering with Goodr’s mobile markets during National Nurses Month allowed us to host a community-benefit project that supported our very own team members, while also providing educative materials about stroke and cardiac health.”

Marianne Hatfield (far left) | Kennestone Chief Nursing Officer



Wellstar System Overview

Our patients are the center of everything we do. We're nationally ranked and locally recognized for our high-quality care, inclusive culture, exceptional doctors and caregivers. We're one of the largest and most integrated healthcare systems in Georgia with more than 24,000 team members—including approximately **7,200 nurses** and more than 3,000 physicians and advanced practitioners.



9

inpatient
hospitals



3

inpatient hospice
facilities



80+

rehabilitation
centers



5

health parks



9

cancer centers



2,775

licensed
hospital beds



1

pediatric center



18

urgent care
facilities



8

emergency
departments



4

senior assisted
living facilities



21

imaging centers



300+

medical office
locations

This report reflects System information as of Fiscal Year 2023: July 2022 – June 2023.

Awards and Distinctions

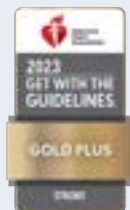
At Wellstar we are committed to creating a healthy work environment where nurses feel empowered and valued. Our nurses are an integral part of the healthcare team, with a voice in policy and practice. Recently, many of our teams earned nationally recognized designations. These honors are evidence of our nurses dedication to enhance quality of care, nursing safety and the future of healthcare delivery. Learn more in articles in this report.



System-wide Winners
(Individuals and Teams)
**The DAISY Award:
58 winners**
*(see article on page 4, and
Hospital Overview starting
on page 24)*

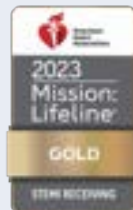


Wellstar Kennestone
Regional Medical Center
**Beacon Award:
1 Gold and 2 Silver**
(see article on page 17)



Wellstar North Fulton
Medical Center

**AHA Get With The
Guidelines® – Gold Plus
recognition**
(see article on page 13)



Wellstar North Fulton
Medical Center

**AHA Mission: Lifeline® –
NSTEMI Gold award and
STEMI Gold award**
(see article on page 23)



Wellstar West Georgia
Medical Center

**Leapfrog Safety
Grade “A”**
(see article on page 20)



Wellstar North Fulton
Medical Center

**Comprehensive Stroke
Center designation
by Joint Commission**
(see article on page 23)



Wellstar West Georgia
Medical Center
Wellstar Windy Hill

**Pathway to Excellence®
designation**
(see article on page 10)



Wellstar North Fulton
Medical Center
Wellstar Windy Hill

**The Georgia Oglethorpe
Award**
Given to organizations that
demonstrate a systematic
approach to performance for
excellence.

Wellstar Success Stories

Creative Innovations

Nurse-led team studies remote fall prevention

WELLSTAR CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

Patient falls are a serious ongoing problem in acute care settings. Prevention interventions include bed alarms, identification signs and bracelets, patient and family education and bedside sitters.

Led by Wellstar Director of Nursing Research Molly McCollum, a research team from the Center for Nursing Excellence launched a study of a promising new strategy to prevent falls. In Remote Video Monitoring, or RVM, virtual or tele-sitters use audio and visual technology to monitor and communicate with patients and prevent falls, much as an in-person sitter would.

The technology was implemented across emergency departments, ICUs, stepdown units, telemetry, acute care and inpatient rehabilitation units at Kennestone,

Paulding, Cobb and North Fulton. The researchers studied fall rates, fall rates with injury and redirection events—when a virtual sitter was able to prevent a fall by redirecting a patient to stay in bed—six months before and six months after implementation of the program. The study also investigated nurses' perceptions of RVM.

In the six months following introduction of the telesitter program, there was a statistically significant 39 percent decrease in falls with injuries. There was no significant decrease in the rate of

falls. Telesitters redirected patients over 43,000 times; 70 percent of these redirections were successful, with the patient remaining safely in bed. Nurses reported moderate satisfaction with the use of the RVM technology, with no significant differences in satisfaction between those who received education about the monitoring method, and those who did not.

The Center for Nursing Excellence plans to further investigate the use of this promising technology to prevent falls and keep patients safe. ■



39%
decrease
in falls with
injuries in 6 months



70%
of redirections were
successful at keeping
patients safely in bed

Exemplary Practice

Trauma designation for emergency department

WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital has been recognized as a Level IV Trauma Center by the State of Georgia Department of Public Health Office of EMS and Trauma.

The years-long certification process required data collection, establishment of protocols and policies, identifying opportunities for improvement and partnerships with community agencies. Evaluators praised the extraordinary effort to achieve Level IV, as well as the quality of patient care within the Spalding Emergency Department (ED). ■



Congratulations to ED team members Dr. Ezaldeen Numur, Trauma Medical Director; Brian Cesar, ED Director; Emily Baldrige, Trauma Program Manager; Tess Frankum, Professional Development Educator; and the entire Emergency Department staff.

Creative Innovations

Research showcase brings out the best

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER

Wellstar Kennestone Regional Health Center nurses hosted an Evidence Based Practice (EBP) showcase, an element in the ongoing effort to stay abreast of the latest literature and best practices.

The event was hosted by the Creative Innovations shared leadership council to promote and celebrate evidence-based practice in nursing. During the showcase, teams selected topics to review and participated in quality improvement projects designed to address specific performance opportunities.

An interdisciplinary panel of seven judges from across Kennestone leadership reviewed each presentation. Winning presentations addressed the impact of clinical nurse leaders in driving a safety-focused culture, decreasing EMS wait times and using guided imagery to wean patients from mechanical ventilation. ■



Congratulations to the winners and to all the nurses who played an important role in fostering excellence by participating:

- **Best in Show:** Adriana Shults and Cindy Bell
- **Most Improved Outcome:** Amy Katner
- **Best Creative Innovation:** Marsha Kadner and Karen Malley

Exemplary Practice

West Georgia, Windy Hill notch prestigious designation

WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER AND WELLSTAR WINDY HILL

Two Wellstar hospitals, West Georgia and Windy Hill, have achieved Pathway to Excellence® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). They were only the fifth and sixth Georgia hospitals to reach the coveted status.

This premier recognition reflects a culture of highly engaged nurses and interprofessional partners that collaboratively create and sustain a vision of exceptional professional practice and a healthy work environment where nurses are valued and encouraged to grow professionally throughout their career.

At West Georgia, the goal in achieving Pathway to Excellence designation was never to add another bullet to its list of accolades, but rather “to demonstrate the hospital’s commitment to caregiver and patient safety, quality outcomes, interprofessional collaboration, volunteerism and health equity,” said Will Carson, MSN, RN, CEN, Manager of Professional Practice and Pathway Program Director.

During the review process, Pathway to Excellence appraisers identified two “exemplars,” at West Georgia—industry best practices that demonstrate innovation. Noted were retention strategies for nurse managers, and a site-wide Wellness Council that supports direct care nurses.

In March, Windy Hill learned that it had received Pathway status as well. The effort was led by Manager of Professional Practice/Pathway Program Director Erin Glover, DNP, MHA, RN.

Windy Hill nurses also participated in a voluntary survey administered by the ANCC. The survey results exceeded all required standards, including favorable responses by at least 85 percent of nurses.

Congratulations to nurses, leaders and team members at both sites for this extraordinary achievement. ■



“I’m so proud of this team and humbled to work alongside each of them. Each of our Professional Registered Nurses exemplify the System’s mission, vision and values by providing outstanding nursing care demonstrated by excellent patient outcomes.”

Betsy Brakocich, DNP, MPA, RN |
Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer of Wellstar Windy Hill



Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center team

Wellstar Windy Hill team

Trauma team members:

Dr. Zachary Austin; Stacey Banton, RN; Glendale Berry, Registration; Teresa Bower, RN; Laurel Eddy, RN; Mariah Head, RN; Kelsey Lawson, RN; Brittany Ledbetter, RN; Ashley Martin, RT; Molly Powell, RN; Hannah Tedders, RT; Jacob Todd, RN; Sabrina Walden, RN, PFC

Teamwork

Organized and ready to respond

WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL

A timely, focused response by the Spalding trauma team was praised by Air Evac Lifeteam, which provides trauma patient flight support. A Spalding charge nurse received a call about a traumatic arrest in the field during resuscitation efforts, triggering Tier 1, the highest-level activation. The flight group found the hospital team organized and ready, noting their calmness, alertness and team approach. Despite the superior response, efforts were eventually terminated, and the staff honored the life of the patient with a moment of silence. ■

Professional Development

A great camp experience, even without the s'mores

WELLSTAR CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

In the Summer of 2022, Wellstar's Center for Nursing Excellence joined academic partners in welcoming 210 participants for the first annual Summer Nurse Camp.

The program, for students in grades 10-12, featured experiential learning and simulation, speakers from the Georgia Department of Health and training in critical care modalities like stopping bleeds, CPR and helipad/ ambulance reception. The event ended with a festive outing to an Atlanta Braves game.

The program drew 600 applicants, and thanks to our amazing academic partners, it was able to expand from a 30 student 3-day program to accommodate 180 additional participants. This expansion was made possible through the cooperation of Wellstar academic partners at Georgia State University, Kennesaw State University, Chattahoochee Tech and Mercer University.

These and other pipeline programs are making an impact on the nursing shortage in the state of Georgia. More than 60 rising seniors have been hired as Care Assistants across the Wellstar System, an important step in the ongoing effort to support frontline team members. ■



210

participants in the Summer Nurse Camp



60

rising seniors have been hired as Care Assistants

Shared Leadership

Re-imagining ED patient flow for lower acuity patients

WELLSTAR DOUGLAS MEDICAL CENTER

On August 30, 2022, Wellstar Douglas Medical Center Emergency Department staff, leaders and interdisciplinary team members participated in a rapid improvement event. The purpose was to improve throughput and patient experience for the Emergency Department’s lower acuity patients in the “vertical zone.”

Metrics and patient feedback had revealed that patients arriving at the ED experienced a disorganized, multistep intake process leading to delays in proper placement and treatment. During the improvement event, root causes including the following were identified:

- Allocation of resources to process patients and the staffing grid did not support the throughput process.
- A lack of standardized criteria for low-risk patients.
- A lack of consistent supplies and equipment contributed to inefficiency.
- Absence of consistent patient hand-off and provider and RN coverage.


As a result of the findings, countermeasures were put in place to improve provider coverage and opportunities for better use of nursing, medic and ED tech. Standard

criteria for patients to be seen in the area were revised with input from nursing and interdisciplinary team members. The 5S process was used to organize and identify needed equipment. And an area for re-evaluation was created and furnished with new recliners and chairs.

The innovative approach to creating this space was fueled by limited capacity for bed space, a higher than desired LWBS (leave without being seen) rate, and patient feedback. Today, over 50 percent of the ED patient volume is seen and discharged through the vertical zone. This is an ongoing initiative with the focus on improving providers’ time to see patients and decreasing the length of stay.

Kudos to an energetic, focused multidisciplinary team for this success! ■




50%+
of the ED patient volume is seen and discharged through the vertical zone



Exemplary Practice

At North Fulton, excellence in stroke care

WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON MEDICAL CENTER

It was a proud moment when Wellstar North Fulton Medical Center was designated as a Comprehensive Stroke Center (CSC) by the American Heart Association (AHA) in December 2022. Additional AHA Get With The Guidelines (Gold Plus Target: Stroke Honor Role Elite Plus, Advanced Therapy and Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll) recognition followed in June of 2023.

Nursing education, standardization of processes and leadership success are among contributing factors. Other Stroke Program elements include stroke drills, community education and advanced neuro training and stroke education for all hospital departments.

North Fulton is especially proud of the role of nurses and other team members, as well as community leaders and emergency responders who are essential to prompt detection and response. Beyond recognition there has been a significant increase in stroke patients treated—from 460 in fiscal year 2021, to 681 this year.

Among additional achievements in stroke care at North Fulton:

The Georgia Stroke Core Curriculum (GSCC) class is a CE-approved stroke course created and taught in the state of Georgia and offered at the hospital.

Stroke Drills educate staff, the community and emergency

responders. In May, a successful Community Stroke Drill Day was held. High school students from Innovation Academy considering a medical career participated in a stroke drill and simulation, using games and role-play.

EMS Stroke preparedness efforts target local EMS providers including the Roswell and Milton Fire Departments. Education sessions are supported by real-time coaching and feedback.

Community outreach is ongoing. A highlight this year was a three-hour education session conducted with the help of a translator at a Spanish-speaking church. The event paved the way for additional opportunities to educate the Hispanic communities on stroke via a Spanish language radio show in the future.

Six Flags Over Georgia Military Appreciation Day provided visitors with educational materials and stroke sign awareness bracelets and magnets as they entered the park. ■



48%

increase

in stroke patients treated compared to fiscal year 2021



Wellstar has conducted Stroke Drills with Community Leaders, high school students, fire departments and community members

Professional Development

Wellstar innovative care model bolsters nursing workforce

CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

Traditionally, Wellstar has focused on recruitment of bachelor's-prepared nurses for inpatient care, while Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) more often serve in outpatient settings.

In response to nurse recruiting challenges, Wellstar and its Center for Nursing Excellence developed a Licensed Practice Nurse program in 2021 to integrate LPNs into the nursing workforce, specifically in the Emergency Department and acute care setting. The initiative required the development of practice guidelines, a curriculum for onboarding, policy and electronic health record changes.

An essential step was to gain support for the idea among hospital Chief Nursing Officers. A team of nursing administrators was formed to review literature and state regulations, and to meet with academic partners in Georgia. It was agreed that the LPN program would be introduced among fast-track, vertical, ambulatory patients in the Emergency Department, and low-risk acute care patients. LPN practice guidelines were developed, the electronic health record system was modified to include RN oversight and System policies were updated to include LPNs.

As a result of the reintroduction of this vital labor resource, 32 LPNs are working successfully at five Wellstar hospitals. Many of these nurses have expressed interest in, or are actively enrolled in bachelor's degree nursing programs. ■



Laniece Jones,
LPN program participant



32

LPNs are working at
5 Wellstar hospitals

Creative Innovations

Bringing superior heart failure management to the neighborhood

WELLSTAR PAULDING MEDICAL CENTER

Wellstar Paulding Medical Center Cardiovascular Services worked together with Heart Failure Nurse Navigator, Holly Holtzclaw, BSN, RN, OCN, and an interdisciplinary team of providers to implement a more localized approach to the active management of heart failure right in the Paulding neighborhood.

One of the new technologies this initiative helped bring home is the CardioMEMS Heart Failure System. This system is a remote monitoring device that measures pressures in the heart allowing for early insight and proactive management of heart failure as it progresses. Formerly, CardioMEMS HF System implantation has not been widely available in all hospitals particularly in more rural locations, therefore making it difficult for patients to benefit from this new way of managing their condition.

In 2021, after negotiating the rigorous approval process, this outstanding team brought the use

of this system to Wellstar Paulding, becoming an approved site for CardioMEMS implantation. Later, in September of 2022, Holly developed a process to aid in identification of qualifying candidates for the CardioMEMS device. Using this process during the patient's admission paved the path to device implantation by collaborating with the patient, the patient's primary cardiologist and insurance providers. Through this team approach, 15 patients have received the CardioMEMS implant, and more candidates continue to move through the journey toward better heart failure management close to home. ■



Teamwork

Empowered teams improve postpartum outcomes

WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

Ineffective communication and substandard teamwork are among the leading causes of adverse events involving obstetrical patients. One team is looking to change that.

According to research collected by Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center's Maternal Mortality Review Committee, 80 percent of all pregnancy-related deaths nationwide are preventable. The hospital's Labor and Delivery and Antepartum Units collaborated on an evidence-based process to enhance teamwork and communication during postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) events.

Maternal-infant services nurses were educated on approaches to improve teamwork during one of these events and will begin quarterly teamwork drills. As well, impromptu PPH drills with real-time feedback were conducted in labor and delivery. Other techniques introduced include closed-loop communication, a PPH checklist and debriefing forms. As part of the initiative, team members wear special badges during PPH events, participate in impromptu drills and undergo ongoing evaluation, as specialized training continues. ■



Seen here are members of the burn team, including Dr. Perry, Burn Medical Director, surrounded by our burn unit nurses and manager. This is a small part of the team that cared for the individuals affected by the house fire. It takes a large team of dedicated individuals that consider it a privilege to do this work each day. They are honored to be able to serve the community with compassion and work together to provide the best quality of care to patients.

Exemplary Practice

Cobb burn team races into action

WELLSTAR COBB MEDICAL CENTER

It was the kind of situation no one at Wellstar Cobb Burn Center wants to be part of, but one that everyone is prepared for. As a result of an early-morning house fire, the specialty center received a call regarding five burn activations—all members of one family.

When they were delivered to the Emergency Department (ED) by local emergency response personnel, three of the individuals were in active cardiac arrest. It was all-hands-on-deck, as the emergency team and burn team worked together to provide critical care. Three of the patients were admitted to the Inpatient Burn Unit and one was transferred to the pediatric burn center in Augusta.

Tragically, one member of the family succumbed to injuries but, as an organ donor, was able to save other lives.

During their stay, Cobb Burn Center staff treated this family as their own, providing loving support,

comfort and skilled care. Eventually, the mother was transferred to Augusta to be near her daughter. Staff worked with other family members and the ethics team to ensure the young boy could be sent home safely in the care of an uncle, until his mother was discharged. The chaplain and executive team members came by to offer support and encouragement to staff during this difficult time.

Following the event, Cobb ED, the burn team and EMS partners participated in a formal debrief. The conclusion was that each team operated at the highest level, caring for the patients with compassion, dignity and respect at every stage. ■

From students to healthcare professionals

WELLSTAR PAULDING MEDICAL CENTER

While some high school seniors are just beginning to think about their future direction, 14 graduates of the Paulding College and Career Academy (PCCA) are on their way to a rewarding career as Certified Nursing Assistants. Through a partnership with Wellstar Paulding Medical Center, the students gain essential clinical experience.

Students are paired with experienced nursing clinicians to develop skills as Care Partners throughout the hospital's Acute Care Units and Emergency



Department. Working directly with patients and providers gives them hands-on experience in providing compassionate care and effectively performing procedures.

The partnership exposes these aspiring clinicians to diverse patient populations, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world practice. The opportunity to work alongside professional clinicians enhances their understanding of nursing

principles while developing essential communication and teamwork skills. The arrangement provides a pipeline opportunity for students interested in becoming part of the Wellstar team.

Paulding nurses are honored to collaborate with PCCA in their mission to “Engage, Inspire and Prepare” students to enter the healthcare workforce in early adulthood. ■

Exemplary Practice

Collaborative approach yields success

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

The Beacon Award, a national designation of unit excellence awarded by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, recognizes achievements in patient outcomes and evidence-based practice. To increase the number of units earning this coveted designation, the Beacon Collaborative launched at Kennestone.

Its purpose is to create a mentoring experience with units that completed the Beacon journey, those considering starting, and those actively on their way. A first step was to identify timelines for participating units. The collaborative reviewed the Beacon framework, analyzing each section of the handbook and brainstorming potential examples for each component of the application. This allowed units to identify and share best practices, start the creative process and provide a detailed application framework. During the writing process, the focus shifted to group editing.

Since the introduction of the Beacon collaborative, Kennestone has experienced an exponential increase in units achieving a Beacon award. Based on a review by a national committee, accepted applicants are awarded a Bronze, Silver or Gold designation. Two hospital units successfully re-designated—one Silver and another Gold, a first for Kennestone. Another unit achieved an initial Silver designation and four teams are awaiting a decision on their applications.

Congratulations to all participants in this innovative, successful strategy for bringing attention to nursing excellence. ■



Beacon awardees set the standard for excellence in patient care environments.

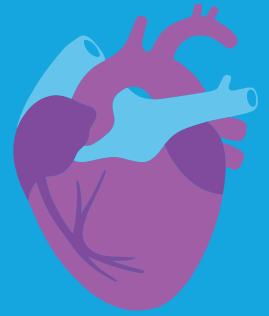


Exemplary Practice

Spalding performs first cardiac ablation

WELLSTAR SPALDING MEDICAL CENTER

Wellstar Spalding Medical Center has expanded its cardiac program with a new procedure, cardiac ablation, to treat abnormal heart rhythms.



Exemplary Practice

Job one at Sylvan Grove Emergency Department

WELLSTAR SYLVAN GROVE MEDICAL CENTER

The Wellstar Sylvan Grove Medical Center Emergency Department (ED) has been on a mission of excellence by providing the best care, delivered with respect and compassion and honoring every voice.

The effort is meeting its mark with impressive patient satisfaction metrics. Serving with compassion—demonstrating empathy and compassion—is job one at Sylvan Grove.

Patients tend to be more satisfied when they feel welcome and attended to. The Sylvan Grove ED team strives to increase patients' comfort and involvement in the

treatment process. The hospital's shorter wait times and frequent rounding make them feel they have not been forgotten. Once in a room, patients also appreciate the hourly updates and the ability to express their level of comfort or pain. They are encouraged to let staff know if there is anything they can do to enhance their comfort and safety.

The ED proudly exceeded patient satisfaction goals in fiscal 2023, completing the year at 70.6 percent, exceeding a threshold of 68.1 percent, a target of 68.3 percent and a max of 69.8 percent. The ED team will continue to strive for ever higher levels of satisfaction and clinical outcomes. ■



70.6%

FY 2023 patient satisfaction

“It was so nice to talk with other staff members about the work we do and to remember together the importance of this work.”

Peggy Burden-White |
Unit Secretary



Shared Leadership

Art helps nurses find peace

WELLSTAR POST ACUTE SERVICES

At Tranquility at Kennesaw Mountain, a Wellstar inpatient hospice facility, frontline staff members provide compassionate care to patients and families during some of their darkest days.

Whether offering support, sharing information about the end-of-life process or providing a calming presence at bedside, hospice team members are there when and where they are needed.

The work is demanding and can take a toll. Recognizing the benefits of art therapy to support providers, Tranquility nurses planned an off-campus crafting day—an opportunity to share a meal and build camaraderie while decorating glass vases. Said CNA Tasha Bennett, “I could just feel myself being happier while I was painting the vases. It was like everything was okay.” Additional supplies were left on the unit for employees to use during breaks or before and after their shift.

After the crafts were complete, a Come-and-Go-Vigil was hosted at Tranquility chapel. The vases were displayed along with twinkling lights and a printed

representation of patients who had passed during the previous five months. A reflection was provided that noted, “May our patients rest in peace. May our families find peace. And may we be at peace to continue the work that we do.” Unit secretary Peggy Burden-White said she greatly appreciated the opportunity to connect with other team members in a unique way. “I felt refreshed and at peace in a way I haven’t in a long time,” she added. ■

“I could just feel myself being happier while I was painting the vases. It was like everything was okay.”

Tasha Bennett | CNA



Pictured is the Wellstar West Georgia executive team (from left to right):

- Bryce Sillyman, VP & COO
- Tracy Gynther, VP & Chief Nursing Officer
- Coleman Foss, SVP & Hospital President
- Tommy Britt, VP - Human Resources

Exemplary Practice

At West Georgia, “A” is for safety

WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center reached a significant milestone in its pursuit of the highest levels of patient safety and quality care. In May, the hospital received a Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade of “A.”

Among factors that contributed to this prestigious recognition:

Robust safety initiatives

Safety is at the forefront of all hospital operations. Evidence-based safety initiatives address key areas of concern, including infection prevention, medication safety and patient falls. Rigorous training programs, coupled with ongoing education, empower the staff to deliver safe and effective care.

A culture of safety

At West Georgia, patient safety is everyone’s responsibility. All team members are encouraged to identify potential risks and participate in proactive safety measures. This collaborative

approach has led to improved communication, enhanced error reporting and implementation of best practices across the hospital.

Technological integration

West Georgia has made substantial investments in cutting-edge systems and tools to reduce errors and streamline workflows. Examples are the Epic Rover mobile interface that improves the accuracy and accessibility of patient information, and barcode verification systems to reduce medication errors and ensure correct dosage.

Quality and safety monitoring

To achieve and sustain excellence in patient safety, the hospital regularly analyzes data,

conducts root cause analyses and collaborates with experts. Performance metrics are consistently tracked using Lean methodology and electronic dashboards. A continuous improvement mindset has led to a culture of learning and innovation.

Patient centered approach

West Georgia actively engages patients and families in their own care journeys through transparent communication, shared decision-making and patient education. This focus has improved safety outcomes and overall patient satisfaction. ■

Wellstar Outpatient Surgery Center

A SERVICE OF WELLSTAR WINDY HILL HOSPITAL



“I do not hold a leadership title, yet now I feel empowered as a staff nurse to use what I learned in the outpatient Surgery Center.”

Amy Simons | Clinical Nurse

Professional Development

Wellstar nurses embrace empowerment

WELLSTAR WINDY HILL AND WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

During the first four months of the year, nearly 350 front-line nurses across Wellstar participated in an exciting Nurse Empowerment Program.

The initiative, sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma) and the Johnson & Johnson Foundation, helps clinical care nurses enhance their leadership skills.

Participants chose from courses addressing eight competencies: leadership development, effective communication skills, dealing with conflict, healthy work environments, diversity, change management, team science and resilience. Completing the Sigma modules afforded nurses the opportunity to earn more than 17 nursing continuing professional development contact hours.

Amy Simons, BSN, RN, Clinical Nurse, East Cobb Health Park Surgical Services called it “an amazing learning opportunity” with direct application to her daily work environment. “I do not hold a leadership title, yet now I feel empowered as a staff nurse to use what I learned in the outpatient Surgery Center,” she said.

According to Erin Glover, DNP, MHA, RN, Windy Hill Manager of Professional Practice, the program aligns with Wellstar’s strategic goals by “supporting leadership development, nurse retention and empowering nurses to champion our journeys of excellence.” ■

Nurse Empowerment Program sponsors:



Nearly

350

front-line nurses
participated



61

nurse practitioners have completed an innovative Transition-to-Practice program



Professional Development

Ground-breaking program to support nurse practitioners

WELLSTAR MEDICAL GROUP

Since its inception in late 2022, 61 nurse practitioners (NP) have completed an innovative Transition-to-Practice (TTP) program for Wellstar nurses who have graduated from NP programs and hold national certification. Wellstar Medical Group made offers of employment to 24 of the participants. Three additional cohorts are currently in rotation.

The program has three areas of focus: leadership development, shadowing and networking and mentored NP practice. Partnering with the Wellstar Learning and Development Team, participants who complete the program earn more than 41 hours of CME credit. They have the opportunity to shadow in three different service lines or clinical offices, building connections and networking as they seek their first NP role.

Going forward, there will be even greater focus on leadership development and professional skills. Shadowing rotations, when many TTP participants find their NP role, continue to be a vital part of the preparation. As well, the program also offers unique opportunities like a lunch with members of the System’s Provider Recruitment team, Crucial Conversations courses, CV revision instruction and skills sessions.

The personal connections and professional growth opportunities during the TTP Program help participants successfully network and move into a long-term NP position within the System. ■

Exemplary Practice

Excellence in cardiovascular care

WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON MEDICAL CENTER

It's been a period of notable achievement in cardiovascular care for Wellstar North Fulton Medical Center.

In late 2022, it was designated a Comprehensive Stroke Center by the Joint Commission. And in June 2023, North Fulton received American Heart Association (AHA) Get with the Guidelines Gold level recognition. For the past two years, the hospital has also maintained the prestigious AHA Mission: Lifeline NSTEMI and STEMI gold awards.

A significant enhancement to the Cardiovascular Service Line was the introduction of a Cardiovascular Nurse Navigator. Maggie Parkhouse, BSN, RN, has made substantial improvements in patient outcomes since assuming the Nurse Navigator role in January 2023.

Maggie, the cardiovascular nursing leadership team and cardiac nurse practitioners have collaborated on a number of initiatives to enhance cardiac care.

Among these:

- A new, all-team rounding technique
- PERT Alert, an emergency alert system for pulmonary embolisms
- Streamlined discharge processes and protocols
- Monthly STEMI meetings with EMS for live case review and feedback
- STEMI education provided to 27 area fire departments

Also of note, cardiovascular nursing leadership has expanded its commitment to education and resource-sharing, within and beyond the walls of the hospital.

Congratulations on an exceptional effort to enhance staff performance and patient outcomes at Wellstar North Fulton! ■



Teamwork

Pressure injuries not welcome here!

WELLSTAR SPALDING MEDICAL CENTER

Congratulations to the 1W oncology team at Wellstar Spalding Medical Center for reaching a major milestone in patient safety—365 days without a hospital acquired pressure injury (HAPI). ■



Hospital Overview



Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center

Founded: 1950 DAISY Award Winners: 6
Licensed Beds: 633 ROSE Award Winners: 5

Awards:

- AACN Beacon Award of Excellence
 - Cardiovascular Intermediate Care – Gold (2023)
 - Trauma Surgery ICU – Silver (2023)
 - Neuro ICU – Silver (2023, 2020)
- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold (2022), Silver (2020)
 - NSTEMI – Gold (2020), Bronze (2020)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Target: Heart Failure – Gold Plus (2022), Silver Plus (2020)
 - Target: Stroke – Gold Plus (2023)
 - Target: Stroke Advanced Therapy – Honor Roll (2022)
 - Target: Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll (2022), Honor Roll Elite Plus (2023)
- AMSN PRISM Award®
 - G5N Trauma Acute Care
 - G5S Bariatric Surgery
- Governor’s Sterling Award Recipients Performance Excellence Role Models (2020)
- Healthgrades:
 - America’s 100 Best Hospitals™ (2023)
 - America’s 250 Best Hospitals™ (2023, 2022, 2021)
 - America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Gastrointestinal Care™ (2022)
 - America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Pulmonary Care™ (2022)
- Gastrointestinal Surgery Excellence Award™ (2022)
- Joint Replacement Excellence Award™ (2022)
- Outpatient Joint Replacement Excellence Award™ (2023)
- Pulmonary Care Excellence Award™ (2024, 2023)

Designations:

- The American College of Surgeons:
 - Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Advanced Comprehensive Cardiac Center
 - Comprehensive Stroke Center
 - Advanced Ventricular Assist Device
 - Total Joint, Total Knee, Hip Fracture
- State designations:
 - Comprehensive Stroke Center
 - Level I Emergency Cardiac Care Center
 - Level II Trauma
 - Level III Neonatal Intensive Care



Wellstar Windy Hill

Founded: 1973
Licensed Beds: 115
(Long-Term Acute Care Hospital)
DAISY Award Winners: 2
ROSE Award Winners: 2

Awards:

- Georgia Oglethorpe Award for Performance Excellence (2022)
- GHA Patient Safety & Quality Summit Awards; 3rd Place (2019)

Designations:

- ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program (2022)
- Pathway to Excellence® Designation (2023)
- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Advanced Total Hip and Knee Replacement (2023)
 - Disease Specific Respiratory Certification (2022)



Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center

Founded: 1937
 Licensed Beds: 276
 DAISY Award Winners: 7
 ROSE Award Winners: 7

Awards:

- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold (2022)
 - NSTEMI – Bronze (2022)
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Silver (2020)
 - STEMI – Bronze (2019)
- GHA Patient Safety & Quality Summit Awards (2019)
- Healthgrades:
 - Patient Safety Excellence Award; Top 10% in the Country (2020)
- Leapfrog Grade “A” (2023)
- Pathway to Excellence® Designation (2023)

Designations:

- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Primary Stroke Center
 - Primary Heart Attack Center
- State designations:
 - Level II Emergency Cardiac Care Center
 - Level IV Trauma



Wellstar North Fulton Medical Center

Founded: 1983
 Licensed Beds: 218
 DAISY Award Winners: 12
 ROSE Award Winners: 10

Awards:

- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold (2023, 2022, 2020), Bronze (2020)
 - NSTEMI – Gold (2023), Silver (2022)
 - STEMI – Silver (2020)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Stroke – Gold Plus (2023), Target: Stroke – Honor Roll Elite Plus, Advanced Therapy, Target: Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll
- Georgia Oglethorpe Award for Performance Excellence (2022)
- Healthgrades:
 - Pulmonary Care Excellence Award™ (2024, 2023)
- Newsweek’s Best Maternity Care Hospitals (2020)

Designations:

- American College of Surgeons:
 - Adult Level 2 Trauma Center
- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Comprehensive Stroke Center



Wellstar Spalding Regional Medical Center

Founded: 1903
 Licensed Beds: 160 – Acute Care
 DAISY Award Winners: 4

Awards:

- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - NSTEMI – Bronze (2022)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Target: Stroke – Gold Plus (2023)
 - Target Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll (2023, 2022)
- Lown Institute Hospital Index Grades: Top 100 Civic Leadership (2020)
- Seramont’s 100 Best Companies for Working Moms® (2023, 2022)
- Seramont’s 100 Best Companies for Working Dads® (2023, 2022)

Designations:

- American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program
- The Competency and Credentialing Institute (CCI)
 - Certified Nurse Operating Room – Strong (2023, 2022)
- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Comprehensive Stroke Center
- State designation:
 - Level IV Trauma Center



Wellstar Cobb Medical Center

Founded: 1968
 Licensed Beds: 382
 DAISY Award Winners: 6

Awards:

- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold Plus (2022)
 - STEMI – Bronze (2020)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Target: Heart Failure – Gold Plus with Honor Roll (2022)
 - Target: Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll (2022)
- Healthgrades:
 - America’s 250 Best Hospitals™ (2022, 2021)
 - Pulmonary Care Excellence Award™ (2022)
 - Stroke Care Excellence Award™ (2022)
 - Vascular Surgery Excellence Award™ (2023, 2022)

Designations:

- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Primary Stroke Center
 - Primary Heart Attack Center
- State designations:
 - Level II Emergency Cardiac Care Center
 - Level III Trauma



Wellstar Paulding Medical Center

Founded: 1958 DAISY Award Winners: 6
 Licensed Beds: 112 ROSE Award Winners: 3

Awards:

- American Health Care: Achievement in Quality Award – Paulding Nursing Center (2019)
- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold (2022), Silver (2021, 2020), Silver Plus (2019)
 - NSTEMI – Gold (2021, 2020)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Target: Heart Failure – Gold Plus with Honor Roll (2023, 2022), Silver Plus (2021, 2020), Bronze (2019)
 - Target: Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll (2023, 2022, 2021)
 - Target: Stroke – Gold Plus with Honor Roll Elite (2023, 2022), Gold Plus Honor Roll (2021), Silver Plus Honor Roll (2020), Bronze (2019)
- Leapfrog Grade “A” (2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016)
- Low Institute Hospital Index Grades: Top 100 Low Composite (2020)
- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Paulding Hospital (2020)
- National Hospital Organ Donation Campaign, Workplace Partnership for Life, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services – Platinum Recognition (2019)
- The Washington Monthly – Honor Roll: The 20 Best Hospitals for America (2020)

Designations:

- ANCC Magnet® Designation (2021)
- ENA Lantern Designation (2021)
- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Primary Heart Attack Center
 - Advanced Inpatient Diabetes
- State designations:
 - Level II Emergency Cardiac Care Center (2021)
 - Remote Treatment Stroke Center
 - Level IV Trauma (2021)



Wellstar Douglas Medical Center

Founded: 1948

Licensed Beds: 108

DAISY Award Winners: 13

(10 DAISY winners, 1 DAISY Nurse Leader Award winner, 1 DAISY Ambassador winner, and 1 DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award)

Awards:

- AACN Beacon Award for Excellence – Silver Level (2022)
- American Heart Association:
 - Mission: Lifeline®
 - STEMI Receiving Center – Gold (2022)
 - STEMI – Silver (2020, 2019)
 - STEMI – Gold Plus Receiving (2019)
 - Target: Stroke – Honor Roll Elite (2019)
 - Get With The Guidelines®
 - Target: Heart Failure – Gold Plus with Honor Roll (2022), Gold Plus (2020, 2019)
 - Target: Type 2 Diabetes – Honor Roll (2022)
 - Target: Stroke – Gold Plus (2019)
- GHA Circle of Excellence Award (2022)
- Leapfrog Grade “A” (2016-2022)
- Lown Institute Hospital Index Grades:
 - Top 100 Lown Composite (2020)
 - Top 100 Patient Outcomes (2020)
- Healthgrades:
 - Stroke Care Excellence Award™ (2022)
 - Patient Safety Excellence Award; Top 10% in the Country (2020)
- Newsweek’s Best Maternity Care Hospitals (2020)

Designations:

- Joint Commission certifications:
 - Primary Heart Attack Center
 - Joint Replacement: Hip
 - Joint Replacement: Knee
- Pathway to Excellence® Designation (2020)
- State designations:
 - Level II Emergency Cardiac Care Center
 - Remote Treatment Stroke Center
 - Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit



Wellstar Sylvan Grove Medical Center

Founded: 1962

Licensed Beds: 25 – Critical Access

DAISY Award Winners: 1

Awards:

- Butts County Business of the Year (2020)
- Leapfrog – 100 Top Rural Hospitals (2017)
- Georgia Hospital Association – Milestone 8 Hospital (2018)
- National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health Performance Award for Patient Perspective (2020)

