More than healthcare.
PEOPLECARE

Wellstar
HEALTH SYSTEM

2020 NURSING REPORT

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.

SHARED LEADERSHIP: THE WELLSTAR WAY

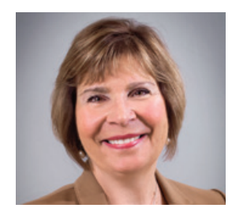
When I came to Wellstar, I knew that there was something truly special about this health system, its connection to the community, its shared values, and the character of the nurses, providers, caregivers, and team members. Five years later, I still share that feeling as I work alongside you every day. And as we look back over this incredible year, I am so proud of how Wellstar nurses have made a meaningful impact on the lives of our patients, families, and communities. The 2020 Nursing Report showcases how our nurses rise to the occasion of living Wellstar's Values every day – serving with compassion, pursuing excellence, and honoring every voice. Together they have sought creative solutions to the complex challenges these unprecedented times have brought to healthcare and our communities.

As our largest workforce, nurses truly embody Wellstar's Mission "to enhance the health and well-being of every person we serve." I am humbled and stand in awe of the leadership that nurses across the continuum have demonstrated. It is not surprising that our neighbor communities here and across the nation have recognized the unique contribution of nursing, honoring nurses as HEROES.

Through our Professional Practice Model and collaboration, Wellstar nurses across the system partnered with their interdisciplinary colleagues to create innovative care models and integrate countless practice changes to promote patient and staff safety. They came up with innovations that lead to better PPE conservation, UV light disinfection of N-95 masks, and connecting patients and families through various technology forms.

This year, we celebrate a milestone in our Journey to Excellence, with Wellstar Douglas Hospital achieving Pathway to Excellence® designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). This designation reflects Douglas's healthy work environment and culture of empowered nurses who lead their practice toward extraordinary outcomes. Systemwide, nursing has received various awards, including two Beacon Awards for Excellence, which recognizes unit caregivers who successfully improve patient outcomes and align practices with AACN's six Healthy Work Environment Standards, and the PRISM award went to a med-surg unit (pg. 17). In addition, Paulding and Windy Hill hospitals both received the CNOR Strong. This year we have experienced a dramatic increase in nurse certifications as our nurses progress their knowledge and careers.

On this 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingales' birth, the World Health Organization declared 2020 the Year of the Nurse. No one could have predicted how fitting this declaration would be with the COVID-19 pandemic. I genuinely admire the commitment our nurses have shown during this global pandemic, the work and dedication to all our patients and communities that we serve, and I remain am confident that together we can achieve anything.



Jill Case-Wirth

Jill Case-Wirth, MHA, BSN, RN
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 DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

Meeting a critical need for our youngest patients

Wellstar Douglas Hospital opened its new four-bed, Level II NICU in August 2019 following the opening of the Women's Center in April. The NICU provides advanced neonatal care close to home, reducing stress associated with traveling to a distant NICU and allowing parents more time with their newborns.

During planning for the new Women's Center, the need for a Level II NICU was addressed by the staff and leadership team. Data revealed that between 2015 and 2017, 73 babies were transferred to a higher level of care. Of those, 53 could have remained at Wellstar Douglas had there been a Level II NICU. A certificate of need was filed and granted to allow the addition of Level II care.

Team members were given the opportunity to transition from LDRP care to NICU. In order to gain the necessary knowledge and skills, team members participated in the Neonatal Orientation and Education Program (NOEP). They completed modules related to caring for high-risk and vulnerable newborns. As well, they attended skill sessions led by Brittany Smith, MS, APRN, ACCNS-N, RNC-NIC, and system NICU Nurse Educators. New NICU staff completed 72 clinical hours at a sister facility to gain hands-on experience and to be deemed competent. This advanced education and training took place at the same time team members continued to work their normal schedules. From August 2019 through May 2020, 46 newborns received care in the new NICU.

In 2020, the Wellstar Douglas Women's Center was honored to be included on the Newsweek Magazine's Best Maternity Hospitals list. Honorees were chosen for demonstrating excellence in "achieving low rates of C-section, episiotomy and early elective deliveries as well as implementing protocols to protect mothers and babies."

46

newborns have received care in the new Douglas NICU from August 2019-May 2020

"The need for creativity and innovation is essential to the education of future nurses. We need to meet them where they are."

Aziza Alexander, DNP, RN

WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Virtual training keeps students on course

Wellstar has found an innovative way to support the future generation of nurses despite pandemic-related challenges to teaching and learning. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, local nursing schools and universities were being heavily impacted due to restrictions on onsite learning. Schools were pushed to provide didactic/skills instruction via a virtual platform for nursing students with limited or no clinical experience. This effect could cause gaps in knowledge and lack of valuable influence of clinicals for senior nursing students transitioning to the professional registered nurse role.

In response to this shortage, Wellstar's Professional Development Unit (PDU) team partnered with specialists at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing at Mercer University to craft a plan to meet the educational needs of 174 senior nursing students accepted into Wellstar's Nurse Residency Program. Based on a learning needs assessment, the combined team determined that the ideal solution to bridge learning gaps was the creation of an NCLEX support group that would be offered as an elective to all potential new graduates.

Following a virtual kickoff, the group participated in four two-hour virtual sessions in June led by a PDU professional educator and a Mercer faculty member. Best practices and test-taking techniques were reviewed. Each week, students practiced 50 or more NCLEX questions and were encouraged to engage with the experts to achieve the correct answers. The program is credited with boosting the confidence levels of participants taking the NCLEX exam, strengthening our academic partnerships, and promoting professional development. Of those who participated and took the exam, 83% passed.

Wellstar's Aziza Alexander, DNP, RN — Professional Educator Emergency Services, says, "The need for creativity and innovation is essential for the education of future nurses, especially during these challenging times. We need to meet students where they are. That's why I support providing nursing scholarships and efforts like the recent NCLEX support group."

WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

Supporting future nurses

It's estimated that by 2030 Georgia will have the sixth highest nursing shortfall in the country. Some analysts predict a critical shortage of some 50,000 nurses in Georgia. Wellstar Health System, in partnership with Kennesaw State University (KSU), is committed to proactively addressing the issue with quality education and training. The initiative will permit Wellstar to continue to provide world-class care to members of the communities we serve.

To address this challenge, Wellstar has provided a $2.5 million gift to create an endowment that will fund annual nursing scholarships at KSU. As well, a $6.2 million partnership grant will pay for the hiring of new nursing faculty and staff over a five-year period.

The Wellstar Excellence in Nursing Scholarship fund will recognize 50 KSU nursing scholars each year. Currently, there are approximately 500 students in KSU's Wellstar School of Nursing. The plan is to increase that number by 20 percent each year, with an ultimate goal of doubling enrollment to more than 1,000 within five years. The grant will support the hiring of up to 32 faculty members and 20 new staff positions by 2025 to support the increase in student enrollment.

Kennesaw State and Wellstar have been collaborating for more than 40 years. The partnership was solidified in 2003, when the university added the Wellstar name to its College of Health and Human Services and School of Nursing. This new, critical funding will allow Wellstar to continue to impact the future of nursing as we strengthen our extraordinary relationship with Georgia's third largest university and its highly regarded nursing school.

We look forward to seeing the positive impact of this expanded partnership on Wellstar, KSU, the nursing profession, and on the people of the state.

KSU Alumni Day

We held the first KSU alumni day hosted by Dr. Barbara Whitten, KSU, and Candice Saunders, Wellstar CEO, President.

Wellstar Nursing Career Pathway Program 2020 Update

The Wellstar Nursing Career Pathway Program addresses the statewide need for nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and RNs with a bachelor's degree in nursing. In the fall of 2020, 26 high school students enrolled as the first cohort. The program lets rising ninth graders with an interest in nursing enroll in college-level courses at Chattahoochee Technical College while still attending high school. Students progress into a 26-hour nursing prerequisite for dual college-high school credit, while earning state aide certification.

Wellstar has committed to provide onsite clinical experience throughout the program. Once students complete high school, the college-level courses they take count toward a nursing degree. Students will also receive clinical placements at Wellstar and will have the opportunity to interview with Wellstar upon graduation. Students from Hiram, Marietta and McEachern High Schools have participated in the career pathway program. ■

STORY OF COMPASSION

Determination, hope, and technology

by Laura Moss, RN IMCU

I always wanted to be a nurse so that I could help people. That's exactly what I tried to do as a new acute-care nurse at Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital. I was getting settled in nicely in early 2020 when the pandemic hit. We were all scared of the unknown but we refused to let our patients see the fear. One of the hardest parts was that the patients could not have visitors. They had no family with them and had to fight alone.

One of my patients was a younger woman who was a COVID rule out. I cared for her for many days, talking to her even though she was intubated and unable to respond. Her prognosis was poor. I updated her husband after every shift I worked. When the hospital started offering FaceTime, I explained to my patient's husband that she would not be able to speak to him, but that he and their sons could see her and talk to her. That night we FaceTimed and the impact of it all hit me hard. Tears slid down my cheeks as her oldest son said, "Mama, you got to get better because I graduate in two weeks. Oh, and Mama, I got a job!" We ended the call and the family was so grateful to see their loved one.

Despite a poor prognosis, my patient started to improve! Every shift I worked we would FaceTime and, as if I was part of the family, I'd learn about what was going on in their lives. I encouraged my patient to keep fighting and to keep that graduation in mind.

The week of graduation arrived, and the school cancelled the traditional graduation ceremony due to the pandemic. Though she had made some improvement, the patient remained sedated and intubated. I asked her husband if I could decorate her room so that on graduation night she could feel as if she were celebrating with everyone. He agreed and when he saw the decorations he just cried! That moment made every bit of effort worth it. It was so special and I was thrilled that the family allowed me to be part of it all. With their approval, I was able to take and share pictures of my patient and her decorated room.

Not long after, the patient was trached and was stable enough to transfer to an LTAC. I was so happy when I got to work and learned she had already transferred. Caring for her, and her family, was definitely the most difficult and gratifying experience in my brief career. I am thankful to be a nurse and thankful to be a part of Wellstar Spalding!

"Caring for her, and her family, was definitely the most difficult and gratifying experience in my brief career."

– Laura Moss, RN IMCU

WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

Focused effort raises key metric

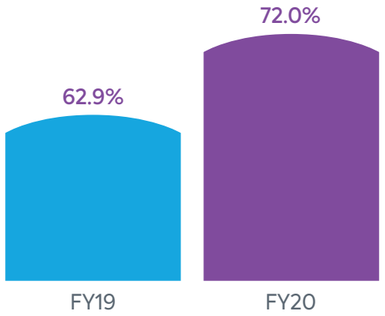
Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center's Six South, a 40-bed unit with a diverse patient population, began the year with a "would recommend" rating of 62.9%. To improve that metric, Nurse Leader Jessica Harrilson strove to build a culture of "ownership of practice."

Jessica rounded on patients to identify trends in patient care and develop her staff. She also used this opportunity to identify top performers and promote best practices. The proven practices were used to coach and develop new and existing team members. As well, Jessica used thematic coaching to drive unit initiatives, aligning initiatives with nurse leader rounding, huddle boards and daily validations.

Survey data was discussed during huddles and used to develop processes to meet the needs of patients and families served on the unit. Daily tracking drove accountability and improvements in patient care. As a result, the unit ended the fiscal year with an improved "would recommend" score of 72.0%, the second highest in the hospital.

Daily tracking drove accountability and improvements in patient care.

Ratings Improvement
Percent of patients providing "would recommend" rating



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 shared decision-making structure 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 PAULDING HOSPITAL

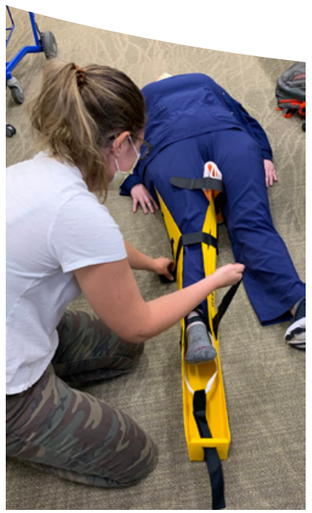
Shared leadership fuels Level IV goal

Wellstar Paulding Hospital is currently building a Level IV Trauma Program to help expand Georgia's trauma care network. The current program, housed in the Paulding Emergency Department (ED), focuses on trauma patient care, injury prevention education and outreach, emergency preparedness, disaster management, and trauma process improvement. The goal is to achieve Level IV designation during FY 2021.

Expanding the trauma program has been an interprofessional team effort. The first step was creation of a Trauma Subcommittee by the ED Shared Leadership Unit Based Council (UBC). This group worked with Trauma Program Manager Kathleen Stone, MSN, RN, CNOR, to perform a failure mode and effects analysis on the Trauma Team Activation (TTA) process. The process was refined based on evidence-based practices and subcommittee input, and an activation policy was approved and rolled out.

Stone and Security Department Manager Scott Martin collaborated to introduce the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Stop the Bleed program for all security staff. The first course was taught in mid-June. All participating hospital security officers received tourniquets and utility belt holders for quick, easy access in case of a bleeding emergency. Stone and Jon King, MS, the Paulding Safety Officer and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, worked together to identify strategic locations to place bleeding control kits for emergency use. As part of the trauma program, community outreach education will resume once pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Trauma education for ED staff is ongoing. ED Professional Nurse Educator Cynthia Gaines, BSN, RN, CEN, hosted a trauma skills day for ED fellowship nurses, and periodic trauma skills refresher sessions are held for all ED staff. One session included training on the new LUCAS device, which helps ensure consistent CPR compression timing and depth during emergency treatment for cardiac arrest.



STORY OF COMPASSION

Grateful nurses give back

The Wellstar Windy Hill Progressive Care Unit (PCU) Shared Leadership Committee fundraises throughout the year and uses the money to honor nurses during National Nurses Week. This year, with the pandemic raging, the committee decided to contribute the funds to the hospital's community food drive, conducted through the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Sarah Meffert, CNL, and Lissa Watson, RN, used the $300 raised to purchase food. This contribution added 521 pounds to the hospital's overall donation.

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

Algorithm shows promise in reducing falls

Blue 5 West, the Neuroscience unit at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital, treats patients experiencing the physical and cognitive deficits associated with neurologic injuries. Despite use of standard work for fall prevention, team members began to see an uptick in patient falls in late 2019 into the new year.

At a Shared Leadership meeting, the unit's leaders presented the concern to the nursing team and challenged them to identify new approaches to reduce patient falls. RNs took the lead and began to research evidence-based literature on fall prevention in a neuroscience population but did not find any strategies that were not already in place at Wellstar. Undaunted, they developed an alternative strategy of a falls algorithm. The algorithm requires the team to escalate or de-escalate fall-prevention strategies based on the number of times a patient attempts to get up unassisted within an hour, thus sounding an alarm.

Intervention level 1	Intervention level 2	Intervention level 3	Intervention level 4
3 alarms sound within the hour. Patient up in chair with supervision; diversional activities as appropriate.	3 additional alarms in the hour following intervention level 1. Increased frequency of monitoring (every 30 minutes during the day; every hour overnight). Patient frequently reoriented.	3 additional alarms in the hour following intervention level 2. Install sitter at bedside (family or staff rotation).	3 additional alarms in the hour following intervention level 3. Obtain order for enclosure bed every 24 hours with documentation. Assessment for removal of bed every shift.

Initial results suggest a decrease in the number of falls in patients that would have triggered the use of our falls algorithm. The most used is intervention level two, more frequent rounding.

WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON HOSPITAL

Critical training during a critical time

To prepare for COVID-19 Wellstar North Fulton Hospital drew its leadership together, rapidly implementing a redeployment strategy for staff.

With competency as its focus, North Fulton partnered with the Center for Nursing Excellence to cross-train over 100 staff members in the first weeks of April (53 were RNs coming in from outpatient areas, Women's Health Services, and ancillary departments) to be ready for redeployment to critical units. In addition, WMG nurses were brought in and cross-trained on the Medical Surgical floor for system redeployment. Training included targeted EPIC training, obtaining rapid access to critical EMR, Point of Care, and Omnicell resources, 12-hour orientation shifts with targeted Initial Competency Assessments, and on-site educator support. Over 278 EPIC Fast Track modules and 1,254 specialty modules on care of ventilated patients, ICU basics, and high-risk medication policy competencies were completed. Together North Fulton and Wellstar came together to proactively support our staff and leaders for the incoming surge and the future of COVID-19 care.

WELLSTAR ATLANTA MEDICAL CENTER SOUTH

5S Project yields trauma bay turnaround

At Wellstar Atlanta Medical Center South's Shared Practice Council, Emergency Department (ED) leaders were repeatedly presented with concerns regarding inefficiencies in the trauma bay. They decided it was time for action.

With assistance from the hospital's Lean Office and Performance Improvement team, stakeholders including ED nursing staff, supply chain, respiratory, facilities, and ED physicians set about to transform the trauma bay into a model of efficiency.

The project was led by consultants who familiarized team members with the various stages of 5S planning, monitoring, and identifying waste. The supply team worked to get all bins labeled and quickly located. Respiratory committed to stocking their own area, facilities modified the room design to provide more space and highlight certain areas, and the nursing team worked to confirm that the layout and supply locations were appropriate and easy to access in the midst of a trauma. When the space was complete, a ribbon-cutting ceremony highlighted the hard work that had taken place. Every day, the room is checked to ensure that everything is in place and ready for the next patient. Following this win, the ED team is preparing for their next 5S project.

> Every day, the room is checked to ensure that everything is in place and ready for the next patient.

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 HEALTH SYSTEM

Collaboration contributes to fall reduction

In fiscal year 2019, falls were the second leading serious safety event reported at Wellstar Health System. The number of falls with injury in all settings, 297, was a significant reduction over the prior year's total of 378. That improvement was the result of facility assessments and a change in the fall risk assessment tool (from the Hendrich II to the Hester Davis). A FY20 system goal sought to further decrease falls with injury by 15%.

The fall-reduction initiative started with a system gap analysis to identify facilities with the highest number of falls, the most-affected patient populations, and contributing factors like incorrect risk assessment scoring, inconsistent use of fall prevention bundle, and patients left unattended while using the toilet.

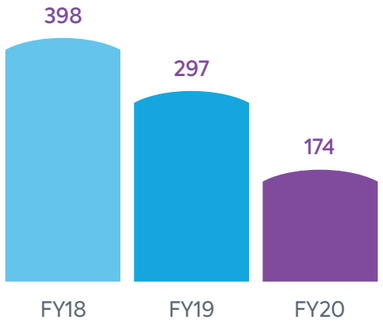
Strategies included restarting the System Falls Council, Gemba walks to review fall practices and increase fall bundle compliance, A3 facility coaching, and creation of a falls data dashboard. Also, the Foot in the Door initiative was launched to prevent patients from being left alone in the bathroom. Improved EMR communication, including caution alerts on at-risk medications and an additional alert banner during admission, contributed as well.

These interventions, the ongoing support of executive leadership, and a renewed focus on the issue met their mark. The FY20 goal was surpassed, with a count of 174, marking a 41.5% reduction from FY19 and a 54% drop from FY18. The key to sustaining the improvement will be regular review of the process using LEAN tools and thinking. Other necessary steps will include:

- Monitor for trends or changes in contributing factors.
- Maintain executive leadership focus.
- Share system-wide data and initiatives.
- Promote facility collaboration.
- Improve system-to-facility communication.

We are confident in the initiative and process to continue to see a reduction in falls.

Reduction in falls resulting in injury
System-wide



WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

Certification for nurse executives encouraged

To advance nursing leadership in our system and across the profession, Wellstar is working to increase the number of nurse executives holding board certification. In August 2019, System nursing leaders participated in a certification review course at the Wellstar Development Center.

According to the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL), there are approximately 12,566 board-certified nurse executives in the United States. If board-certified nurse executives were evenly distributed among the 6,210 hospitals in the United States, there would be only two per facility (AHA, 2019).

To become board-certified, nurse executives must meet educational and experiential criteria and pass a rigorous examination. There are two levels of board certification available through ANCC for nurse executives, basic and advanced. Both exams cover structures and processes, professional practice issues, leadership, and knowledge management. The advanced exam focuses on the transformational nurse leader's role in creating environments that foster exemplary professional practice. Since the course was offered in August, several participants have achieved nurse executive board certification, an important milestone for individual nurse leaders and for Wellstar's ongoing journey to excellence.

"Y'all are taking such good care of my brother, thank you so much."

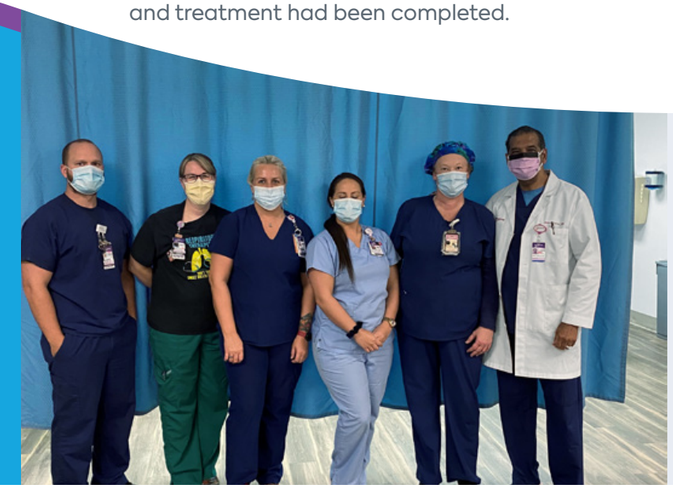
C.W. Driskill

STORY OF COMPASSION

Family is good medicine

by Martha Lusk

A patient was admitted to Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital ICU in early May for metabolic encephalopathy, hypoglycemia, hypovoliemia dehydration, hypothermia, and anemia. He was confused and did not speak. After 12 days in the ICU, he was transferred to 2West and we began daily Interdisciplinary Rounds (IDR). During IDR, we were able to schedule a FaceTime call with his brother. As soon as he saw his loved one, the patient lit up and began to smile. On a subsequent call, the patient was able to converse with his brother. It was so amazing to see this take place. His brother was thankful and said, "Y'all are taking such good care of my brother, thank you so much."



WELLSTAR SYLVAN GROVE HOSPITAL

Shorter wait, more patient satisfaction

In FY17, the Wellstar Sylvan Grove Emergency Department identified an opportunity for improvement around discharge length of stay. Baseline data showed a median overall discharge length of stay of 123 minutes, arrival to bedtime of 18 minutes, arrival to physician of 33 minutes, and disposition to discharge of 28 minutes. The improvement initiative aimed to have 75% of discharged patients discharged in under 120 minutes.

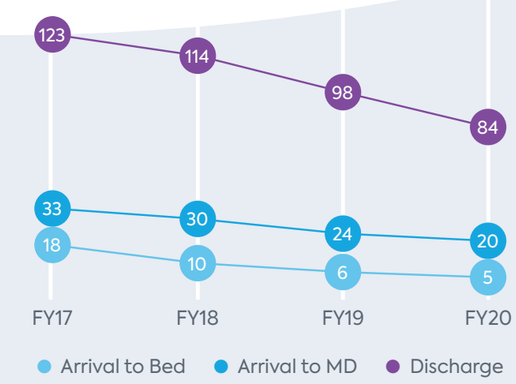
Using Lean Six Sigma methodology, the team began to break down each component of an ED visit, starting with ways to shorten the time to see a physician. A PDSA (plan-do-study-act) cycle was initiated with use of the pull-'til-full concept. After two weeks, the arrival to room time dropped from 18 minutes to 10, and door-to-doctor time decreased to 30 minutes. The process was evaluated and refined until, in FY18, the median door-to-room time had dropped to five minutes and the median arrival to MD time to 20 minutes.

The next focus area was disposition to discharge. This is the period from when the physician marks the patient up for discharge until the patient is released. This was 28 minutes at the beginning of the initiative. A competition was launched to see who could log the shortest disposition to discharge time. By FY19 it had been reduced to 15 minutes. The initiative revealed a number of concerns, such as physicians marking a patient for discharge prior to completion of treatment. Working together, the nurses and physicians concluded that the patients would not be marked for discharge until all testing and treatment had been completed.

Finally, in FY19, the ED Steering Committee was started to include ancillary services. During committee meetings, each department presented its testing turnaround times in order to identify testing delays that might be increasing length of stay. Among issues that came to light were delays in urine collection and patients not being placed in gowns for radiology studies. The team diligently addressed these delays. Patients were provided urine cups upon arrival and asked to provide a sample promptly. Shared Governance worked to ensure that all patients were placed in gowns prior to radiology studies.

Ultimately, overall discharge length of stay was reduced from 123 minutes in FY17 to 84 minutes by the end of FY20. Arrival to room dropped from 18 to 5 minutes. The arrival to physician metric went from 33 minutes to 20 minutes, and disposition to discharge was reduced from 28 minutes to 14. The lean process used has positively affected patient perception of care and has advanced a positive culture in the Sylvan Grove ED. Congratulations to leaders and team members on a great achievement.

Discharge Length of Stay
in minutes



Wellstar is making a historic investment in nursing leadership development. This focus is in part a recognition that nurse leaders are critical to our journey to excellence.

WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

Leadership development push under way

The Center for Nursing Excellence and Organizational Learning have jointly embarked on a journey to create a comprehensive nursing leadership development strategy. Chief Nurse Executive Jill Case-Wirth, set the vision: Wellstar will develop nurse leaders and support their progression, from charge nurse to the chief nursing officer.

The leadership development strategy would address the full nursing leadership continuum, from individual leader development to internal promotion and succession management. It would include targeted development programs for charge nurses, assistant nurse managers, nurse managers, and nurse executives system-wide.

For charge nurses, we executed a pilot of the NCharge program developed by Catalyst Learning. Significant improvements were noted in transformational, transactional, leadership outcomes and resiliency from pre-post intervention. Among the 22 charge nurses who participated, the training elicited higher satisfaction with leadership behavior, effectiveness and the ability to motivate (Spiva et al., 2020).

For nurse managers and assistant nurse managers, we selected the Essentials of Nurse Manager Orientation (ENMO) program, developed by the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) and the Association of Critical Care Nurses. The program provides a comprehensive overview of areas essential to the nurse manager role. Significant improvements were noted in transformational, transactional, leadership outcomes and resiliency among 46 participants.

For nurse executives, we are offering strength-based coaching as well as external development opportunities. Research shows that individuals who use their natural talents consistently are more likely to be engaged in their professional roles and report a higher quality of life (Rothwell & Crabtree, 2019). It's also known that executives who lead with their strengths and create teams with diverse talents are more likely to improve organizational performance. We encourage all nurse leaders to pursue leadership development fellowships and educational opportunities with organizations like AONL and the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). And we urge leaders at all levels to pursue board certification as nurse executives.

Wellstar is making a historic investment in nursing leadership development. This focus is in part a recognition that nurse leaders are critical to our journey to excellence. As well it acknowledges the fact that in order to make Wellstar a great place to work, we must support learning and growth for nurse leaders and their talented teams.

Reference:

Spiva, L., Davis, S., Case-Wirth, J., Hogue, V., Box, M., et al. (2020). The effectiveness of charge nurse training on leadership style and resiliency. JONA 50(2), 95-103. Rothwell, J. & Crabtree, S. (2019). Not just a job: New evidence on the quality of work in the United States. Gallup.

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

Awards recognize excellence

Congratulations are in order at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital where two units were recognized with prestigious awards.

The silver-level Beacon Award for Excellence earned by the Neuro ICU at Wellstar Kennestone Blue 5 East marks a significant milestone on the path to exceptional patient care and healthy work environments. It recognizes unit caregivers who successfully improve patient outcomes and align practices with AACN's six Healthy Work Environment Standards. Units that achieve this three-year, three-level award with a gold, silver, or bronze designation meet national criteria consistent with Magnet® Recognition, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and the National Quality Healthcare Award.

The award reflects an effective approach to policies, procedures, and processes that includes engagement of staff and key stakeholders. The unit has evaluation and improvement strategies in place, with good performance measures compared to relevant benchmarks.

The Neuro ICU earned its silver award by meeting the following evidence-based criteria:

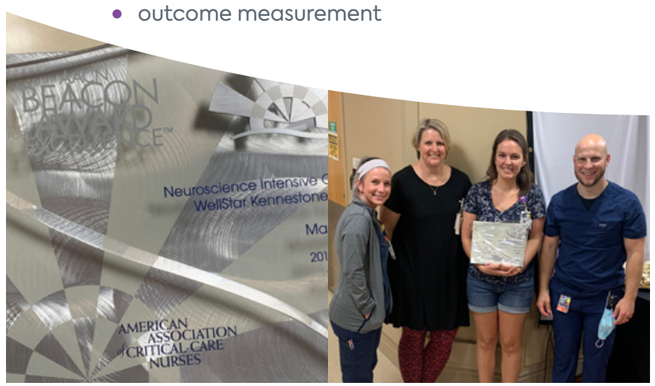
- leadership structures and systems
- appropriate staffing and staff engagement
- effective communication, knowledge management and learning and development
- evidence-based practice and processes
- outcome measurement

The second award, earned by team members on 6BE, a med-surg unit, is the PRISM award (Premier Recognition in the Specialty of Med-Surg). MSNCB and the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN) co-sponsor the AMSN PRISM Award®. Through this distinguished honor, AMSN and MSNCB identify and celebrate medical-surgical units that achieve sustained excellence.

PRISM acknowledges the impact of accountability, communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, and professional growth on medical-surgical nursing. Noted Debra Saylor, 6BE Nurse Manager, "Winning this award is acknowledgment of how a nursing team can make a difference in patient care and experience. The 6BE team is thrilled to be recognized for exemplary patient care."

"Winning this award is acknowledgment of how a nursing team can make a difference in patient care and experience."

Debra Saylor, 6BE Nurse Manager



WELLSTAR DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

Douglas achieves Pathway to Excellence

Wellstar Douglas Hospital team members were deep into responding to the coronavirus epidemic when they received welcome news on April 10, 2020—Douglas had been named a Pathway to Excellence hospital. It was the first Wellstar hospital, and the fourth in the state, to receive the prestigious nursing designation.

Pathway to Excellence is the premier designation for healthcare organizations, reflecting their commitment to a healthy work environment where nurses excel and their voices are heard. The achievement marked the culmination of more than two years of effort—countless hours of planning and writing, and the commitment of leaders and direct care nurses to a culture of excellence.

PATHWAY DESIGNATED
AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER

Acceptance requires submission of a comprehensive document outlining how the facility meets six practice standards encompassing 64 elements of performance. Once the document is accepted, the applicant participates in a nurse survey that validates the document and meets the minimal response rate for the survey questions. Wellstar Douglas was commended on survey results including the fact that 69% of eligible nurses completed the survey. As well, the favorable response rate on all questions was equal to or greater than 92%. Douglas Hospital exceeded the required baseline for 50% of nurse respondents to strongly agree or agree on all survey questions, and exceeded the requirement for 75% to strongly agree or agree on at least 21 of the 28 survey questions.

This awesome achievement would not have been possible without the support of the Douglas leadership team, system leaders, and team members who assisted with writing and data collection. Behind it all lies the outstanding dedication of our nurses to provide world-class healthcare to every person, every time.

WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

Congratulations, Kristen Brown and Blake Landry Wellstar 2020 Working Mom & Dad

Being named Wellstar Working Mother and Father of the Year in 2020 is a special distinction. Though it's an honor anytime, no other year has presented similar challenges, especially for parents who are front-line healthcare professionals like our winners, Kristen Brown, RN, and Blake Landry, PA. Our winning parents handled their challenges with grace and determination, giving 100 percent to both their patients and their families. Congratulations, Kristen and Blake! And thank you to the nearly 100 team members who submitted nominations and to our multidisciplinary panel of systemwide judges who had the task of choosing from among a stellar group of nominees.

Wellstar Working Mother 2020

Kristen Brown, RN | Wellstar Spalding Regional Medical Center NICU

"Kristen loves hard and cares deeply," wrote her nominator. "Her heart is pure, and this shows through her work. No one is more deserving of this award."

"My whole life I've wanted to be a mom and a nurse, so being a working mom is an honor and a privilege," said Kristen. "It's something I cherish every day." Cherishing every day came into clearer focus five years ago, when Kristen and her husband, Adam, lost their nine-month-old son, Aaron.

"Aaron had Down syndrome, and his heart conditions kept him in the ICU a lot," explained Kristen. "His death changed the way I work; I have a better understanding of parents' experiences in the NICU. I use my loss to help parents who have suffered the same pain. My life events have made me the mom I am today and I'm so thankful for the journey I've been given."

Kristen leads the bereavement efforts for her department, supporting parents as they navigate grief. "Kristen is a nurse to our babies, and a family to the parents," said her nominator.

"It's humbling for me to represent working moms," said Kristen, "and it's awesome that Wellstar takes the time and effort to sponsor this award."

Wellstar Working Dad 2020

Blake Landry, PA | Wellstar Pulmonary Medicine – Hiram

"We all look up to Blake," said his nominator, "and consider him family." He takes pride in being a husband, father and healthcare provider. He's been in the office every day during the pandemic, making sure patients and peers are cared for, and helping our awesome MDs with virtual appointments. He's a leader for all the APPs throughout Pulmonary, and trains all our new PAs, never skipping a beat with his patient load. And he's devoted to his wife, Erin, a PA at East Paulding Primary Care, and his two girls."

"Erin and I truly split parenting roles 50-50," said Blake. "My outpatient position allows me to be present and active in the lives of my wife and children, and extend the best care to my patients."

"Blake never says no to a need," said his nominator, "whether it's changing diapers, cooking dinner, helping a patient, or even giving someone a cup of water."

"Wellstar is so good at providing the extra stuff," said Blake. "From generous parental leave, to awards like this, Wellstar does a lot for us. I appreciate that fathers are being recognized!"

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 PAULDING HOSPITAL

Surgery team solves for safety

In March 2020, Paulding Hospital's interprofessional Surgical Services leadership launched an initiative to address the impact of the pandemic on surgery. As more information emerged about air-purifying respirator (PAPR) use in the OR, this team of innovators collaborated with Emergency Management (EM) to acquire the respirators.

The use of PAPRs in the OR was a new practice requiring clinical team members to be trained on proper donning and doffing. Based on recommendations from EM, AORN, the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the CDC, the Surgical Services Educator, leadership, and several team members began developing a comprehensive plan for the use of PAPRs in the sterile environment. All Surgical Services staff, surgeons, and anesthesia providers had opportunities for training prior to surgery, as well as just-in-time (JIT) training. JIT training was also offered to surgeons, proceduralists and anesthesia providers from other Wellstar facilities.

Using PAPRs in the sterile environment posed a number of challenges. Adjustments were made to protect the sterile field, according to the type of PAPR involved. The first adjustment was adapting the donning process to incorporate use of sterile gowns, gloves, and X-ray gowns. The next issue addressed the need to prevent contamination of the sterile field while wearing a mask under the PAPR hood. Because mask wearing increases the likelihood of fatigue, team members were educated on fatigue awareness. Another important adjustment was ensuring the safe use of equipment such as the surgical microscope, headlamp, or loops with the PAPR hood. Techniques for overcoming communication barriers while using PAPRs, including repeat back and visual acknowledgement, were discussed.

Team leaders collaborated with Engineering on construction of two anterooms in the OR to provide safe doffing space in a negative pressure environment. A COVID call schedule was implemented to provide the needed resources for the doffing assistant for after-hours cases. The sterile processing department adjusted staffing to cover 24/7 availability and developed a decontamination process to provide pickup, cleaning, and delivery of PAPRs on the nursing units.

Congratulations to the Paulding Hospital Surgical Services team for their responsiveness and dedication to providing a safe environment for team members and patients. The team included Lydia Casteel, MSN, RN, CCRN, Director of Surgical Services; Jennifer Parker, BSN, RN, CNOR, Manager of OR/G; Valencia Robinson, BSN, RN, Manager of Perianesthesia; Andrea Joseph, MSN, RN, CNOR, Surgical Services Professional Nurse Educator; Shannon Turner, RN, CNOR, Clinical Nurse; Dr. Denis Trto, Anesthesiologist; and Dr. David Parks, ENT Specialist.

PAPRs used in the OR *(top)*, proper donning *(middle)*, and anterooms *(bottom)*

"The new processes rolled out had worked perfectly. I can not help but say how proud I am to be part of the team."

Elizabeth A. Peters, MSN, RN, SCRN
Stroke Program Coordinator
Wellstar Cobb Hospital

STORY OF COMPASSION

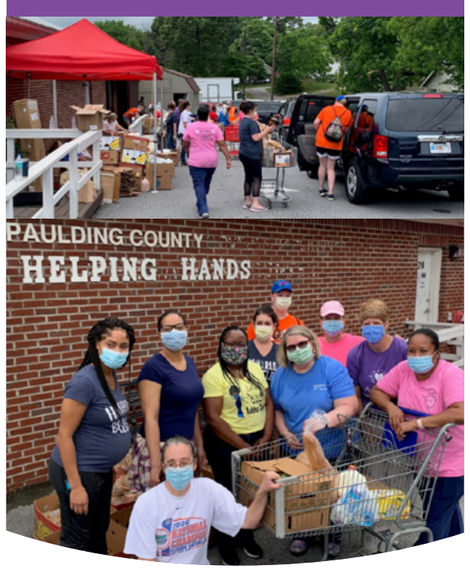
Committed to care

A patient entered the ICU as a potential stroke alert and tested positive for COVID. The patient safely completed a CT scan, but quickly began to decline. The ICU was alerted and a respiratory team arrived quickly to intubate. The CT revealed a neck abscess so Dr. Hughes, a radiologist, and Dr. Mishra, an internist, collaborated on how to ensure safe intubation. All remained calm, kind, and careful. It was a true team effort with one nurse reminding others to don face shields, a nurse assured our physicians were gowned properly, and another nurse collected family phone numbers. After a successful intubation, the patient was transferred to the ICU where team members continued to check on each other during the patient's care. In my years of nursing, I have rarely observed such love and kindness among caregivers. I'm enormously proud to be part of the team. Our leaders, including hospital President Callie Andrews, have led us well and at moments of challenge like this, it shows!

WELLSTAR COBB HOSPITAL

Providing helping hands in the community

Professional Practice Team volunteers



During National Nurses Month in May, Wellstar Cobb Hospital's Professional Practice Department participated in a community service day at Helping Hands of Paulding County, a nonprofit social services agency. The department, which includes Clinical Nurse Leaders, a Professional Educator, and Program Coordinators, used a shared governance process to plan the initiative.

Among other tasks, the volunteers helped assemble bundles of food for delivery to those in need, including many especially hit hard by the pandemic. More than 300 grateful families received deliveries of milk, bread, fresh produce, water, and other groceries. The assistance was timely, as Helping Hands of Paulding County relies heavily on the support of volunteers, many of whom were sidelined by the stay-at-home regulations.

It was a great day for the Wellstar Cobb Team. Participants noted how good it felt to give back to the community they serve, especially in light of the kindness shown to healthcare workers during the pandemic. It was also a welcome opportunity for team members to spend time safely together outside of the hospital.

WELLSTAR COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

KSU and Wellstar partner on mask decon

Faced with a shortage of N95 respirator masks, Kennesaw State University (KSU) engineers assisted a multi-disciplinary Wellstar team in developing an operational plan for their newly built ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) room at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital. In the UVGI room, masks are decontaminated for reuse.

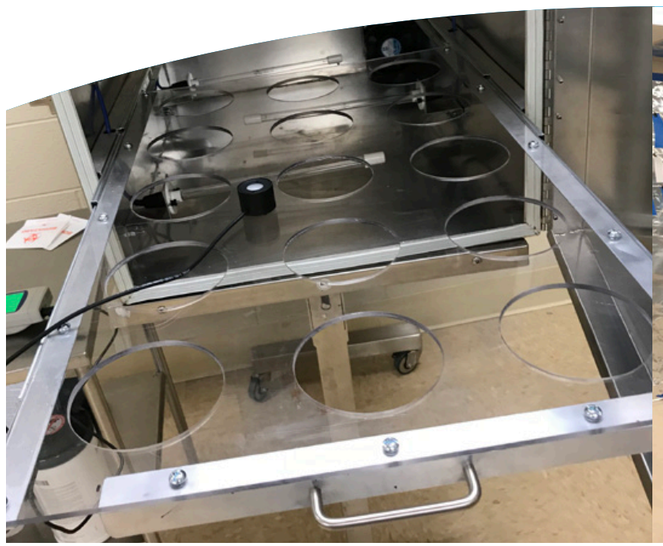
KSU professors Andrew Hummel and Awatef Ergai, along with recent graduate Austin Crawford, lent their expertise to Wellstar clinical and non-clinical team members in the effort. The UVGI process works by exposing the masks to ultraviolet C (UVC) light, which is absorbed by DNA and protein molecules to effectively kill contaminants with the proper amount of exposure.

Leveraging an existing relationship with KSU's Wellstar College of Health and Human Services, LeeAnna Spiva, PhD, RN, contacted the University in March seeking help. The KSU experts helped Wellstar anticipate opportunities for failure, such as electricity loss and other risks. The room, which measures 14 by 20 feet, was filled with 11 UVC light bulbs, permitting more than 100 masks to be decontaminated simultaneously. The engineers ran calculations to quantify the amount of UV exposure required to achieve decontamination levels.

With the room established, Wellstar next turned to Professor Ergai to help improve process flow and eliminate room for error. She focused on identifying ways to best hang the masks throughout the UVGI room and address the potential process failures that had been identified.

Crawford, who earned his degree in electrical engineering in May, assisted by taking measurements in the UVGI room to confirm geometrical model effectiveness. During a student co-op experience, Crawford had gained extensive experience in light modeling, which he applied to this project.

Using a similar approach, a UVGI box was installed at Wellstar Cobb Hospital. The collaborative effort has led to two Institutional Review Board research studies to generate new insights regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in the healthcare environment.



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 PAULDING HOSPITAL

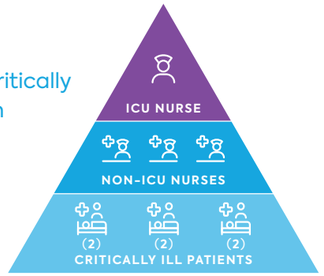
Staffing innovation supports busy ICU

As a result of the pandemic, the number of critically ill patients admitted in March 2020 to Wellstar Paulding Hospital ICU increased. ICU Clinical Care Nurse Dana McAmish, RN, and VP Patient Services Vicky Hogue, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, EDAC, CNO, learned of a new tiered staffing model that was developed prior to the pandemic and thought it could help.

The staffing model was developed by the Society of Critical Care Medicine in anticipation of a surge in demand for critical care beds and a potential shortage of skilled physicians and nurses. It appeared to Paulding nursing leaders that the tiered approach could serve as a framework to provide efficient, high-quality care to ICU patients during the COVID-19 response. Under the model, each ICU nurse would provide oversight for three non-ICU nursing staff members per shift who would be temporarily loaned to the ICU.

Tiered Nursing Plan

Staffing would consist of one (1) critically care trained ICU nurse paired with three (3) non-critical care trained nurses. Each team would be able to care for six (6) critical care patients using this model.



A steering committee identified needs and assets. The concept was presented to ICU clinical nurses who were favorable toward the plan, which would expand ICU capacity from eight to 28 beds. ICU and Stepdown Telemetry Nurse Manager Angela Day, MSN, RN, CCRN, NE-BC, worked closely with ICU and Acute Care Professional Nurse Educators Emily Bradshaw, BSN, RN, CCRN, and Allyson Perko, BSN, RN, PCCN, to oversee training. Clinical nurses from across WPH—from the Cath Lab, to the Emergency Department, Cardiac Admit Recovery Unit and other areas—responded positively and many volunteered to participate.

CARU Clinical Nurse Rayna Knotts, BSN, RN, immediately offered to participate, as she had past experience in ICU. "I felt the need to step up and help the team in any way possible," she said. Volunteer PACU Clinical Nurse Megan Hicks, BSN, RN, says she felt supported by the ICU team. "I have experience in critical care, but it was comforting to know that I had an experienced ICU nurse overseeing my work and as a resource for questions."

> "I have experience in critical care, but it was comforting to know that I had an experienced ICU nurse overseeing my work and to be a resource for questions."
>
> Megan Hicks, BSN, RN, PACU

The pandemic called on WPH clinical teams to think and act more collaboratively than ever. During this challenging time, they were called on to care for and support patients, families, and each other, practicing professionally at the top of their licenses. Together, they served a large number of high-acuity patients by strategically mobilizing resources and executing innovative solutions. The effort embodied the WPH motto, "Neighbors Caring for Neighbors."

WELLSTAR ATLANTA MEDICAL CENTER

Creative use of a new space

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the Wellstar Atlanta Medical Center Downtown Emergency Department realized that it would be necessary to expand the ED footprint in order to treat an anticipated patient surge.

A space in the 345 building, a former bistro, was quickly and efficiently converted to accommodate patients with mild COVID-19 symptoms who would likely not be admitted overnight.

In a matter of weeks, the area was adapted to create treatment space for five patients, a dedicated waiting room, and a makeshift X-ray room. It was a team effort all the way; nursing worked closely with EVS, IP, Pharmacy, Facilities, Security, Lab, Respiratory, and Radiology to execute the plan as quickly and safely as possible.

The plan also called for staffing the area with an RN and an APP. These nursing team members helped run COVID testing swabs and guide patients to the treatment area following registration at the front desk. Although the additional space was used only a handful of times during the spring COVID-19 surge, it served an essential function and remains ready for patients during a possible second wave or for any other need.

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

Family caregiver class inspires confidence

Patients who experience a stroke are often discharged home in the care of family members. Relatives are forced to adjust to the new role of caregiver with little warning, which can lead to excessive stress, unmet needs, and unnecessary return visits to the hospital.

69%

of new caregivers noted a positive change in awareness and self-care after taking the caregiver class

Family members of Wellstar Kennestone Hospital stroke patients found that participating in a caregiver class can alleviate some of the stress.

An interdisciplinary team of Stroke Nurse Navigators, Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation Directors, Rehabilitation Physicians, and a Rehabilitation Psychologist worked this year to develop the curriculum for a one hour class for new caregivers. The class, titled, "What to know before you go," is held weekly at Wellstar Kennestone, led by the Rehab Psychologist.

Participants reported significant benefits according to a pre- and post-class assessment, with overall perception of discharge readiness increased from 62% to 85%. New caregivers also noted a positive change (69%) in caregiver awareness and self-care, with the most positive changes related to greater awareness of the challenges involved in caring for a loved one and having the tools they need to be effective.

STORY OF COMPASSION

Groom's mom shares the joy

On Saturday, June 6, nurses had the opportunity to help Ms. Jones, a patient on the third floor, virtually attend her son's wedding in the Blue Ridge mountains. Using FaceTime and a screen adapter, the image from her bedside tablet was projected onto a larger television screen. Though she was not able to hear the audio, Ms. Jones sat in her hospital bed with obvious joy as she told the nurses all about her son Christopher and his bride Karen. She proudly pointed out her younger son Benjamin, who was officiating, and his wife Kristie. Her smile was never brighter than when her grandsons, three-year-old Jacob and Ethan, seven, appeared on the screen and walked to stand beside their dad at the altar. Ms. Jones was grateful to everyone who helped ensure she could be a part of her son's special day and they were honored to be able to participate.

WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

Focus on falls shows success

A performance improvement (PI) project undertaken by team members on the Green 5 West (heart failure) unit at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital was launched to identify patients positive for orthostatic hypotension and reduce their risk of falls.

The project team included Clinical Nurse Leader Cindy Bell, Susan Bird of the Quality Department, Lysha Cook, ANM for G5 West, and Christy Cook, ANM for B6 West (thoracic unit). The decision to focus primarily on heart failure was based on the fact that diuretics and other medications prescribed for heart failure patients have the potential to cause orthostatic hypotension.

LESS THAN 2%

of orthostatic hypotensive patients on the unit experienced a fall incident

As part of the project, an orthostatic precaution sign (visual cue) is hung on the wall at the head of the bed of patients identified as positive for orthostatic hypotension. The sign notes interventions regarding getting the patient in and out of bed, in an effort to reduce the risk of falls. Education—written and verbal—is provided to the patient and family when appropriate, during admission and again at discharge.

The unit also uses a high-risk medication sheet developed by pharmacists that helps nurses identify high-risk medications other than diuretics. After five months, metrics suggested that the project was a success. Out of approximately 105 positive orthostatic hypotensive patients on the unit, less than two percent experienced a fall incident on the unit. Congratulations to all involved in this focused, successful initiative.

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