



MedStar Health

Celebrating a Culture of Nursing Excellence

on Our Continued Journey Toward
Magnet Designation

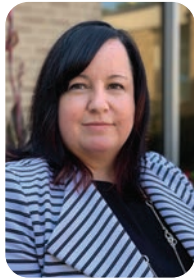


MedStar Harbor Hospital
FY23 Nursing Annual Report

It's how we **treat people.**



A message from the Chief Nursing Officer



What a year it's been for the nursing team here at MedStar Harbor Hospital! We've all heard that the process of earning Magnet designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) is a "journey" that requires a ton of time, energy, commitment, collaboration, and passion. That has certainly rang true for our hospital. I could not be more proud of the many ways our team has given all of those things, while also exemplifying what "excellence

in nursing" truly means, as the long journey toward Magnet has continued.

Our Professional Practice Model clarifies what our nursing priorities and values are and how every nurse who is employed by MedStar Harbor Hospital is engaged as we focus on transformational leadership, exemplary professional practice, structural empowerment, knowledge, innovation, and outcomes, and work with each other to provide the best possible care for our patients. Collaborative governance, education, wellness, technology, and community engagement were key themes for our nursing team this year. At the same time, we embraced the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our nurses and recognize those who are true role models in our clinical care environments. This year, our Nursing Annual Report showcases how all of these things come together, and define what our culture of nursing is all about.

It is a true honor and privilege to serve as Chief Nursing Officer at MedStar Harbor Hospital. I am inspired by our nurses, and truly grateful for the many ways they go above and beyond to make this hospital a great place to receive care, and an even greater place to provide care.

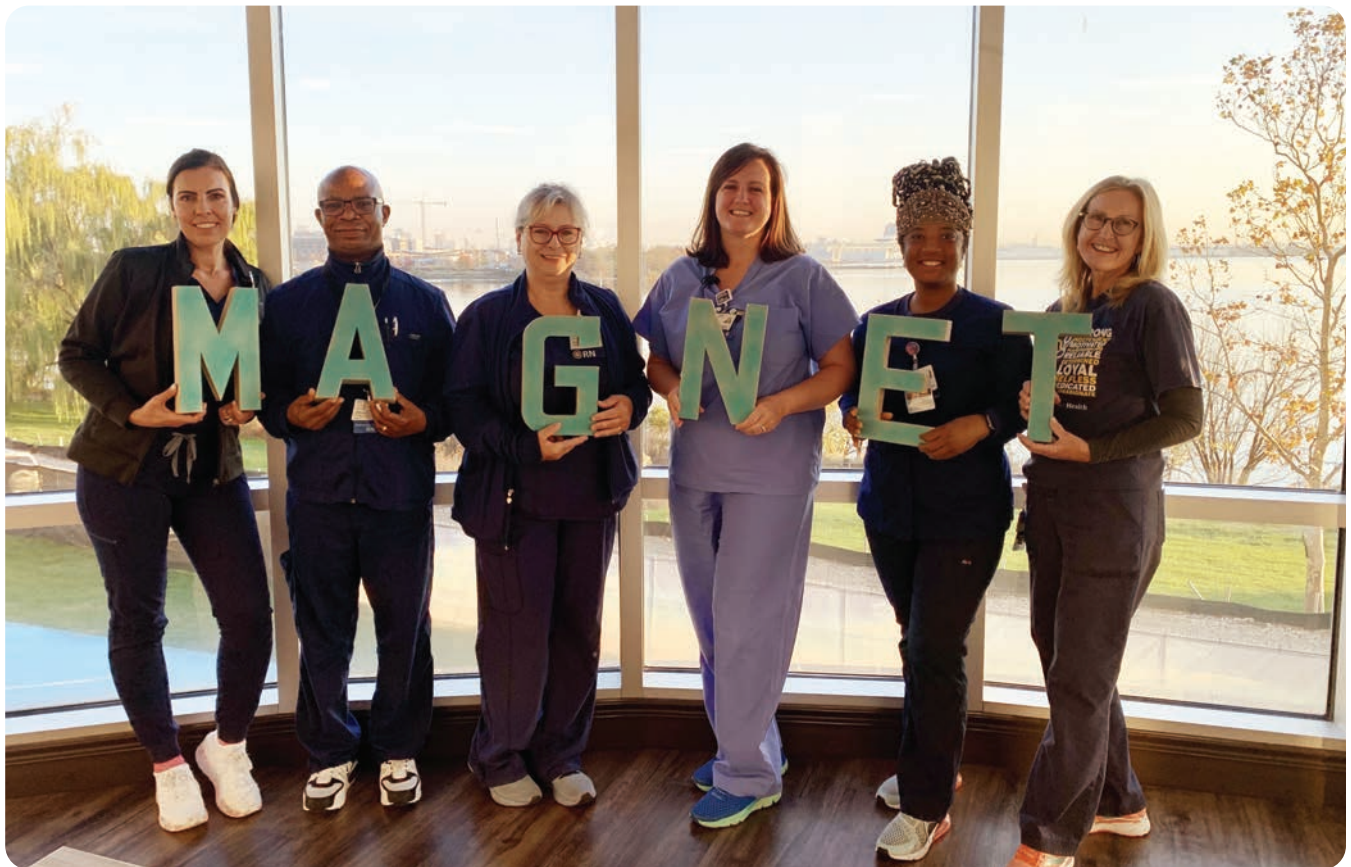
Warmly,

Karen Elliott DNP, MHA, RN, NEA-BC, CNO & VP

Karen Elliott, DNP, MHA, RN, NEA-BC
Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Care Services

Table of Contents

Our Journey Toward Magnet Designation.....	3
What Magnet Means to Me ...	6
Our Professional Practice Model	7
Caring for Our Care Providers	10
Collaborative Governance...	11
Celebrating Nurses Week....	13
Nurse of the Year	15
Jean Watson Award.....	16
Pillar of Nursing Award	17
Preceptor of the Year Award	17
DAISY Awards.....	18
Safety Award.....	18
<i>Baltimore Magazine Awards</i>	<i>18</i>
Impact Award	19
Labor & Deliver Certifications.....	19
Beyond the Pandemic	20
Nursing Education	21
Nursing Informatics	22
Exceeding Key Metrics.....	23
In the Community	24
Nurse Leadership Directory	25



Our Continued Journey Toward Magnet Designation



Excellence in nursing has always been a key organizational priority at MedStar Harbor Hospital. Several years ago, executive leaders, nursing leaders, and staff nurses began discussing the possibility of pursuing Magnet designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The consensus was that the hospital's nursing team was operating in a way that was already, authentically, meeting the requirements of Magnet designation. So, it was an easy decision to begin the application process.

Magnet designation demonstrates alignment between strategic nursing goals and patient outcomes. It provides a roadmap for nursing excellence, encouraging education and professional development opportunity for nurses through every stage of their careers. For patients, it means the very best care is delivered by a team of nurses who are supported to be the very best in their field.

Fiscal year 2023 was a crucial time for MedStar Harbor Hospital, with focus on collection and submission of stories and data that depict a clear picture about how patients are cared for, how nurses work to continuously optimize both patient outcomes and experience, and how staff from all units and departments are engaged and valued.

Magnet documentation submitted

December 2022

December 1, 2022 marked an incredibly important milestone for MedStar Harbor Hospital. After years of preparation, the organization submitted all of the documentation required by the ANCC, for review. Approximately one thousand pages of material were compiled, providing quality data and sources of evidence (stories) that reflect a commitment to excellence and culture of pride in nursing at MedStar Harbor. Leaders and nurses united to celebrate, and recognize all of the hard work that had been done to reach this important milestone.

Every nurse who was cited in the submitted Magnet documentation received a personalized letter, along with a copy of the story they were part of. This was a simple, yet meaningful way to recognize nurses for their work, and the role they played in helping MedStar Harbor Hospital pursue Magnet designation.

Staff engagement

Ongoing

Engaging staff from all units and departments has been a continued focus and priority at MedStar Harbor Hospital, since the day the decision was made to pursue Magnet designation. Chief Nursing Officer Rounds, a Magnet cart packed with educational tools, games, and prizes, and themed “Magnet Mondays” aimed to accomplish goals centered around engagement and education, in fun and creative ways. In March, the Magnet Monday table featured a St. Patrick’s Day theme, complete with a pot of gold and treats to be found at the end of a rainbow. In the Spring, the table shared important Magnet messages inside of brightly colored eggs. And in December, staff were encouraged to swing by to learn some new things about Magnet, with a hot chocolate bar featuring crushed peppermint, as a yummy incentive.

“Our Magnet Monday events spread awareness through getting staff involved and helping them understand the importance of the Magnet process,” said Amber Schmale, BSN, RN, who serves as one of the hospital’s Magnet Ambassadors. “It was great to see everyone excited about our progress, and what Magnet means to the hospital.”



Cruising into Magnet Fair

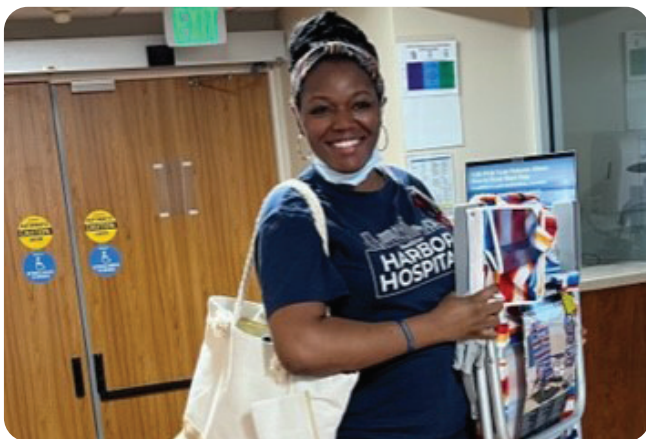
June 2023

On June 29, 2023, more than 400 leaders and associates from various departments and units took part in MedStar Harbor Hospital's Magnet Fair, featuring a cruise ship theme with various "ports of call," where staff could learn about quality, professional development, and patient experience priorities. As staff rounded to the series of "ports" they received stamps, and earned chances to win raffles and a beach-themed grand prize.

The hospital's Magnet Ambassadors, donning sailor hats, played an instrumental role in the success of this event, which centered around education about the significance of Magnet designation along with celebration of key achievements. Staff appreciated the opportunity to have some fun with their colleagues, playing volleyball and cornhole, and posing for pictures inside a photo booth.

One of the highlights of the event was the opening of a nursing time capsule, created during the 2021 Magnet Fair, as MedStar Harbor's journey toward Magnet designation was just getting started. At that time, nurses had been given an opportunity to write down a few words to express "What Magnet Means to Me." Upon opening of the capsule, those perspectives were shared, for inspiration. Among them, "It's about time!" And, "It's exciting to see our nurses take the lead. Let's see how far we can take excellence in the next year!"

"The Cruising Into Magnet Fair was an important event for our team as we prepared for our ANCC site visit," said Amy Bartholomew, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CCRN-K, director of nursing practice innovation and Magnet Program director. "You could feel the momentum, and that people from across the organization were excited to be part of something that was truly special. It was a great opportunity to engage and educate staff, in a fun way."



What Magnet Means to Me

Achieving Magnet status means different things to different nurses. But one thing remains a constant—everyone firmly believes that because of the delivery of and dedication to evidence-based collaborative care, as well as the demonstration of high-quality patient outcomes and positive patient experiences, MedStar Harbor Hospital is truly deserving of the designation.



“To me, being a part of a Magnet hospital means a safer environment for both nurses and patients. Magnet means better patient outcomes thanks to evidence-based practice.”

—Erin Kirby, BSN, RN, C-EFM, Women and Infants’



“Magnet is important to me because it’s all about patient-centered and interdisciplinary care. It is about all of us coming together to meet the needs of the patients. I’m so excited to be a part of this.”

—Amber Schmale, BSN, RN, ICU



“The pursuit of Magnet designation has inspired me to do more. It’s about setting and achieving goals. It opens doors for nurses to build new skills in ways that enhance care for our patients. It is nice to work for an organization that values nurses. Our leadership team is very approachable and has made it clear that they want to hear from us. When we speak up, people listen.”

—Johnna Detorio, RN, PACU



“It is a privilege and honor to work at MedStar Harbor Hospital, and to be part of team that is worthy of Magnet designation. We have worked very hard to put the right processes and resources in place, and as a result, we can spend more time with our patients and provide them with the highest level of quality care.”

—Roselle Ponce, RN, South 4



“Everyone here collaborates to assure our patients are safe and satisfied. It is rewarding to be part of a team that is committed to addressing and resolving challenges, together, so we can all be our best. I am grateful for my job at MedStar Harbor Hospital because I have opportunities for career advancement and growth.”

—Katelyn Smith, RN, Behavioral Health



“To me, Magnet means having leadership support and being valued as a nurse when we come up with ideas for implementing changes.”

—Sandra Isaac, BSN, RN, South Main 3

Our Professional Practice Model

Representing the Delivery of Nursing Care

Our Professional Practice Model (PPM) illustrates MedStar Harbor Hospital's values, beliefs, culture, and processes for nursing practice as they are integrated with the hospital's Mission, Vision, and Values.

The power of MedStar Harbor Hospital's Professional Practice Model lies in our ability to integrate three major components of care delivery: an interdisciplinary model of care, community service, and evidence-based patient care practices.



Jaime Krasauskis

An Interdisciplinary Model of Care (IMOC)

What happens when nurses, physicians, advanced practice providers, case management teams, social workers, pharmacy leaders, respiratory therapists, and physical and occupational therapists collaborate to take

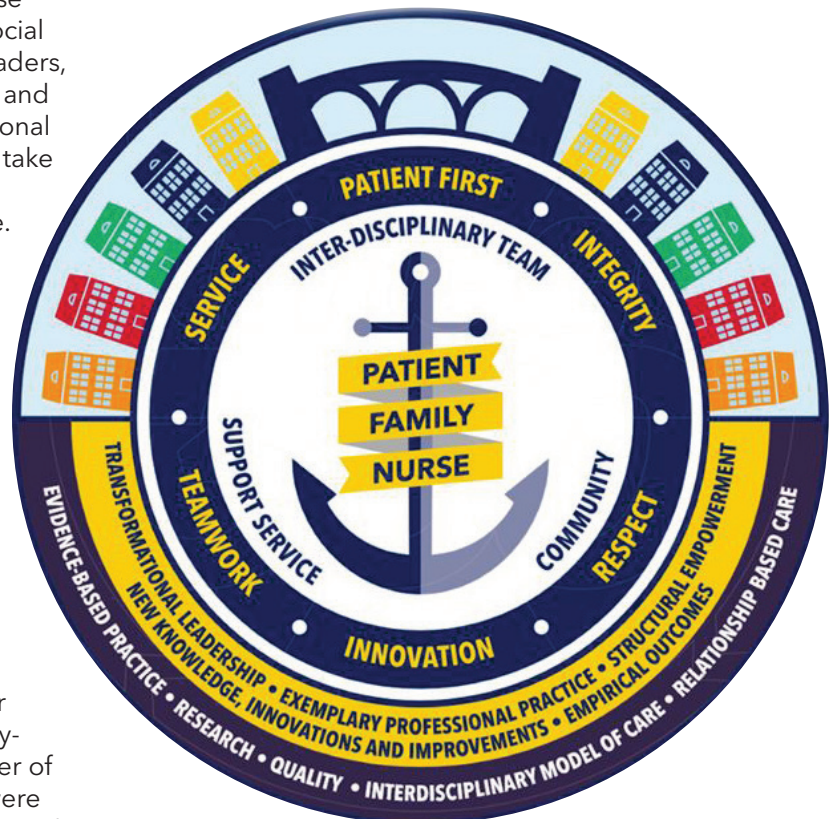
care of patients? Quality of care improves. Readmission rates decrease. Patients thrive.

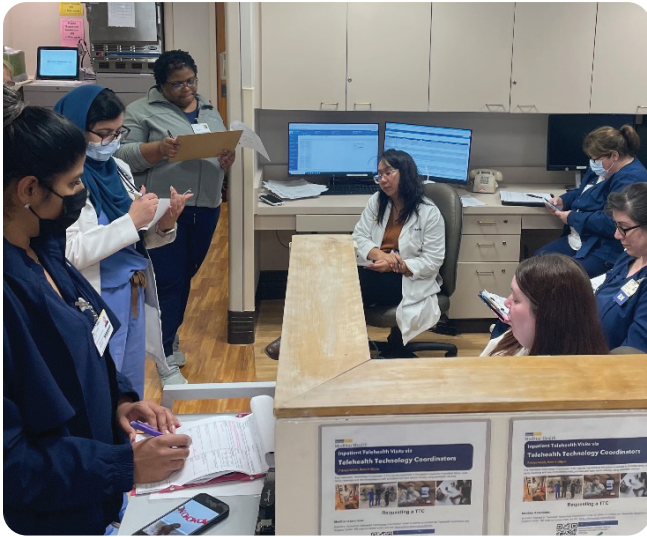
"Each discipline that touches a patient at some point during their hospital stay meets at different intervals during the day to discuss the care plan for the patient," explained Jaime Krasauskis, BSN, RN, CNML, director of nursing in the ICU and on South Main 3. "This collaboration not only improves quality of care by preventing things from slipping through the cracks but also improves throughput."

During IMOC rounds, teams are guided by a standardized checklist that focuses on achievement of key quality metrics. For example, on the telemetry unit, one clearly-established goal was to reduce the number of catheter-associated infections. Priorities were to reduce the number of catheters placed, and

to reduce the amount of time they remained in place when deemed medically necessary. MedStar Harbor Hospital's IMOC approach played a key role in reaching these goals.

Important to note, however, is the work of MedStar Harbor's IMOC teams focuses on the care patients need while they are in the hospital, as well as what their discharge plan will entail and how their recovery process can remain on track, once they are discharged.





“We work together to address each patient’s medical issues as well as any factors that will impact their ability to heal and recover once they are home,” said Susan Jennings, BSN, RN, CCM, director of case management. “We want to help our patients overcome barriers, and ensure they have the resources needed to have a good quality of life, with decreased risk for health issues that would call for a readmission to the hospital.”



Susan Jennings

Barriers such as lack of transportation for doctor appointments, food or housing insecurities, or the inability to manage medications are discussed with the collective group before a patient is discharged. Everyone works for the greater good of the patient on every level of care.

Susan added that decreases in the length of stay for many patients are also a direct reflection of collaborative care.

“When we are working as a team, we’re more cohesive, more efficient,” she said. “Everything gets done in a timely fashion. Quality of care increases while the length of stay goes down. It’s a win-win for our patients.”

Community outreach

Caring for people outside of the walls of the hospital is another key goal highlighted by MedStar Harbor Hospital’s Professional Practice Model.

Chris Roberge, MSN, RN, clinical quality manager, is especially proud of the success of the hospital’s drive-through flu vaccination clinic. Held annually in October, last year’s clinic had over 25 staff volunteers who vaccinated more than 100 people in the local community. The volunteers who take part in this event help with everything from directing trafficking to handling the registration process, administering vaccinations, updating immunization records, and distributing goodie bags to participants.



“Our no-cost flu vaccination clinic is a great way to serve the residents of our surrounding neighborhoods. We even accept walk-ups for those people who do not have a car,” Chris explained. “Our goal is to help people in our community take charge of their health. This outreach effort is one way we can keep people as healthy as possible.”

Chris also serves as a committee chair for the hospital’s Patient and Family Advisory Council on Quality and Safety. Staff, along with several members of the local community, meet monthly to discuss the hospital’s strategic direction as

well as ongoing outreach events. The Council provides community members with the opportunity to interact with executive leadership, bringing their unique perspectives to the table to help optimize quality. Council members also provide feedback on outreach materials the hospital produces to keep the local community informed while helping spread word to neighbors about events taking place, including the flu vaccination clinic.

“The Advisory Council and all of our outreach efforts let people know that the hospital is a vital part of their community and that we are here to serve and care for them,” said Chris.

Evidence-based care—improving outcomes for new mothers

Another important component of the hospital’s Professional Practice Model is the delivery of evidence-based care, to improve patient outcomes, quality, and safety while also reducing healthcare costs. As part of the process of becoming a CAP nurse 3, Erin Kirby, BSN, RN, C-EFM, pursued her evidence-based project, with focus on minimizing incidences of postpartum hemorrhage for women in the Labor and Delivery unit.

Erin’s project examined the differences between quantitative blood loss and estimated blood loss during caesarean section and vaginal deliveries to reduce the incidence of serious complications and improve outcomes for new mothers.

Using a mobile application on a phone, nurses can access the Triton system, a technology that is capable of more accurately calculating blood loss during and after childbirth.

“In the past, many physicians estimated a mother’s blood loss. Through my research, I found that when blood loss is high, physicians tend to underestimate and when it was low, blood loss is overestimated. The Triton system allows us to scan and weigh blood-soaked items as well as suction canisters. Through this process, we can confirm blood loss amount so that we can act accordingly when a patient needs immediate attention,” said Erin.

Erin added that the goal is to ensure the Triton system is being used in 100 percent of deliveries. Data collection on its impact from quality and safety standpoints will be the next step of the project.

“The Triton is a very important tool. As a unit, we are all now using it to help improve quality of care for our patients,” Erin said.



Caring for Our Care Providers



Wellness retreat for leaders

In April 2023, the Wellness Committee held a retreat for hospital leadership from our nursing, education, security, food and nutrition, and respiratory departments.

The focus was communication and collaboration and how staff could support one another in times of stress. The day was filled with activities and conversations that focused on appreciating the unique attributes that each individual brings to the table.



Nurse shortages, patient surges, and increased demands on time and resources are continued challenges for nurses across the country. MedStar Harbor Hospital's Wellness Committee is designed to give nurses new resources to take care of themselves, in the midst of taking care of patients.

"As wellness champions, our goal is to get the word out to staff about the resources we have available to help nurses decompress, feel supported, and focus on their own well-being," said Angel Masemore, BSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, CPC.

The committee held events during Hospital Week and Nurses Week to educate staff about wellness resources and benefits, including mental health support services that are available. Information was also delivered to nursing units on both day and night shifts.

"The wellness champions also rounded with the wellness cart where staff could grab a free stress ball, snack, essential oils, and items that were designed to help relieve stress," added Marivic Bacwaden, MSN, RN, CCRN.

The Wellness Committee facilitated a nursing survey to collect feedback on what teams need, in order to increase their overall health and well-being. Nurses expressed that music and the opportunity to take sufficient breaks during their time on the clock would be helpful and bring them joy. They also suggested that areas be created and designated for them to decompress, enjoy a quick snack, and relax in a massage chair could be helpful for stress management.

Several members of the Wellness Committee also attended the Successful Nurse Wellbeing Conference in March 2023 where they were certified in Essential Stress First Aid.

Collaborative Governance

Unit-based councils aim to engage and unify teams

In a profession where collaboration, clinical excellence, and teamwork are vital, unit-based councils play a significant role in empowering staff as well as enhancing patient care and clinical outcomes.

MedStar Harbor Hospital's unit-based councils foster the exchange of ideas and solutions, giving individuals a voice and a place to make a difference. As this model continues to grow, we are putting the spotlight on a few successful implementations that are demonstrating the value and impact of collaborative governance.

Emergency Department

Angelica Marrero, MSN, RN, FNE-A, CEN, who leads the unit-based council in the Emergency Department (ED), explained that nurses and staff come together to discuss issues and develop or enhance policies and procedures. Over the past year, MedStar Harbor Hospital has seen a growing number of sexual assault cases. As an ED and forensic nurse, Angelica led the council in developing a revised sexual assault policy and care standards during Fiscal Year 2023. The outcome was the development of a detailed fact sheet with clearly defined care protocols for sexual assault patients. In addition, the council, working closely with ED physician assistants, is developing solutions for reducing the rates of contaminated urinalysis and the need for repeat tests, which wastes time and money.



South Main 3

South Main 3's robust unit-based council has brought members of the day and night shifts together to improve processes and patient care. Projects such as the "Five Minute Sit Down" came about as a way to improve nurse communication. The council surveyed nurses and staff to collect input on ways to improve communication, resulting in the addition of chairs in each patient room where nurses can sit and spend time talking to patients about their needs. As a result, communication scores increased. The council also worked with the social work and case management teams to create a patient transfer binder for weekend staff. The binder includes information and forms to facilitate patient transfers over the weekend to rehabilitation facilities.

"This project was so well received by the collaborative governance council that our unit's work is being shared with other units as an example," added Sandra Isaac, BSN, RN, council chair.





One of the most extensive projects the council has been focused on is the Magnet journey, working together to ensure that all policies and protocols are evidence-based and up-to-date. A group of 30 to 40 council members meet monthly to discuss best practice, implementation of new protocols, and quality improvement initiatives. Staff from the hospital's nursing, case management, transport, and food and nutrition teams are all part of this council, with a vision to involve even more departments in the future.

"Everyone works together, providing unique perspectives and serving as part of the processes that impact patient care. The council gives people a voice and an opportunity to make a difference," Brittany said.

Increasing morale on the unit has been an additional council priority. Monthly raffles have given staff opportunities to win prizes such as a summer beach bag, a massage, and an Echo Dot.

"We're also planning to schedule some fun time outside of work such as a paint night for the staff," said Sandra. "Our council brings the team together for the good of our unit and our patients."

Nursing Excellence Council

Brittany Sherbert, BSN, RN, CCRN, chair of the Nursing Excellence Council, describes this group as an interdisciplinary team of professionals who are committed to advancing the practice of nursing at MedStar Harbor Hospital.

"We work to advance policies, procedures, research, and all things that impact nursing to help improve patient care throughout the hospital," Brittany explained. "The council is a great way for individuals in all departments to come together to discuss quality improvements and processes, ask questions, address hospital-wide issues, and enact positive change."



Celebrating Nurses Week



Celebrating Nurses Week



Nurse of the Year

Presented to Nancy Gonzales, BSN, RN



“Nancy is known as a nurse who always goes above and beyond to take care of her patients and her team. She is meticulous about the details that matter in the operating room, and advocates strongly for patient safety. Nancy is a problem solver and a true team player, that we all depend on. We are very proud of her for earning this well-deserved award.”

—Marivic Bacwaden, MSN, RN, CCRN
Assistant Director of Nursing,
Perioperative Services

Nancy Gonzales, BSN, RN, lives the MedStar Harbor Hospital SPIRIT Values every day. So when she was named the 2023 Nurse of the Year, she wanted to share the honor with her colleagues.

“Being chosen as Nurse of the Year is an honor and I’m thankful for the recognition. I share this award with my team because without them, I couldn’t tackle the everyday challenges that we deal with,” Nancy said.

Nancy, who has been an operating room nurse for more than 10 years, has a reputation for being a team member who consistently goes above and beyond in providing exceptional patient care while always supporting her colleagues. She doesn’t think twice about putting the needs of her patients first, coordinating care with the ICU, collaborating closely with a patient’s healthcare team to ensure the best outcomes, supporting families through surgery, and creating a supportive and respectful environment for those around her.

Nursing wasn’t always Nancy’s career course, although she said, it was her mother’s dream for her. In her first year of college, she focused on dentistry, but as fate would have it, a problem during enrollment set her on a new path in nursing.

“I began enjoying nursing when I took a psychology course and liked it even more when I started my clinicals,” Nancy said.

Nancy says that being named Nurse of the Year inspires her and challenges her to be better, as she looks forward.

“I am thankful that I am valued for the work I am doing. Recognition is just a bonus. More important to me is implementing the SPIRIT values as I am working with patients and co-workers,” she said.

Also important to Nancy is seeing those around her leave the hospital happy.

“I receive the greatest joy from my job when I see my patients going home well. And on the days we are busy but have finished our procedures on time and safely, my co-workers are happy too,” said Nancy.

Jean Watson Award

Presented to Deirdre Murdock, BSN, RN



Exemplifying Jean Watson's theory of human caring, Deirdre Murdock, BSN, RN, was recognized for her innate abilities to create personal and deep connections with people, demonstrating acceptance and understanding of all individuals, and providing support and a sense of calm even in the most challenging of situations. For these and many other reasons, Deirdre was recognized with MedStar Harbor Hospital's Jean Watson Award in 2023.

A neuro-telemetry nurse at MedStar Harbor Hospital, nursing wasn't Deirdre's first career but she said it was the only career she was ever meant to pursue.

"Nursing is a part of you long before you go to school for nursing or pass the NCLEX. I finally found a career that is fulfilling beyond words. I wanted to help people in a meaningful way that has a lasting impact on their lives and mine," Deirdre said.

Deirdre has certainly made a lasting impact on those around her. She found a way to calm a long-term patient, for example, by having him engage and interact with staff and visitors, demonstrating her outside-of-the-box approach to helping her patients feel valued and important. Her ability to diffuse challenging situations in a calm and empathetic manner sets her apart not only with patients but with staff as she supports her peers, recognizing when her colleagues need a break during times of stress.

"I am most grateful for this prestigious award," said Deirdre. "It has always been my goal to provide care that promotes health by acknowledging the needs of each patient to meet their health goals. I love caring for people during their most difficult and sometimes vulnerable times in life. And, I like the people I work with and the culture of this institution."

Why we honor Jean Watson ...

Each year, MedStar Harbor Hospital presents the annual Jean Watson Award to a nurse who demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to caring for others. Jean Watson's philosophy and science of caring centered around how nurses express care in their interactions with patients. She believed a holistic approach to healthcare was critical in the practice of nursing, and that care demonstrated by nurses promotes growth through 10 carative factors:

- Forming humanistic-altruistic value systems
- Instilling faith-hope
- Cultivating a sensitivity to self and others
- Developing a helping-trust relationship
- Promoting an expression of feelings
- Using problem solving for decision making
- Promoting teaching-learning
- Promoting a supportive environment
- Assisting with gratification of human needs
- Allowing for existential-phenomenal forces

Pillar of Nursing Award

Presented to Rachel Stracke, RN



The 2023 Pillar of Nursing Award was presented to Rachel Stracke, RN, of South Main 3 in recognition of her leadership, calm and supportive demeanor, positive rapport with her colleagues, and excellent clinical skills.

“Rachel exudes leadership skills each day. She has adapted well to the charge nurse role and assists her colleagues in completing their assignments even on the most chaotic shifts. Her excellent assessment skills prevented the hospital from having two HAPIs,” her nominator wrote.

The Pillar of Nursing Award recognizes an individual or team that provides the necessary foundation for the hospital to deliver high-quality, safe, and efficient patient care, as well as a positive patient experience. It also recognizes nurses like Rachel who demonstrate a balanced approach to leadership and decision-making, and who are resources for every member of their team.

“It was very exciting to win the Pillar of Nursing Award! We have a lot of tough days as nurses and sometimes that leaves us questioning if we chose the right career. Winning this award has reassured and motivated me to continue learning so I can be the best nurse for our patients,” said Rachel. “I became a nurse so I could help people. Seeing our patients leave as healthier versions of themselves is the best reward a nurse can ask for.”

Preceptor of the Year Award

Presented to Ella Jackson, BSN, RN



Respectful. Mentor. Educator. Understanding. Go-to person. These are just a few of the words used to describe Ella Jackson, BSN, RN, assistant director of nursing on the behavioral health unit at MedStar Harbor Hospital. In 2023, Ella was named Preceptor of the Year, in recognition of the positive impact she continuously has on others.

“Ella continues to be the most helpful resource to me when we work together. She has never made me feel like my questions are silly. She is highly knowledgeable and enjoys sharing that knowledge in a way that helps others be our best,” said her nominator.

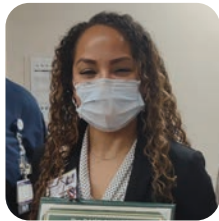
Ella decided to pursue a career as a behavioral health care provider when a family member was struggling with mental health issues. She wanted to learn how to care for her family member and be their support system.

“Winning this award means so much to me,” said Ella. “Teaching people how to care for others makes me more passionate about my job and my role in the behavioral health setting. My peers make my job so much easier. We work well together as a team.”

DAISY Awards

Throughout the year, outstanding nurses at MedStar Harbor Hospital are presented DAISY Awards. The award, which stands for Diseases Attacking the Immune System, was established in memory of a patient who died of an autoimmune disease after being hospitalized for eight weeks. J. Patrick Barnes' family created this award as a way for patients, families, and staff to recognize and thank those nurses who go above and beyond in providing excellence in clinical care.

Congratulations to our FY23 winners!



Ivelisse Acevedo
BSN, RN



Fernando "Tony" Johnson, AND, RN

Safety Award

Congratulations to Sara Lockett, RN, recipient of MedStar Harbor Hospital's 2023 Safety Award.



Upon notice that a newborn baby's risk for sensitive infections was high, she worked with the child's pediatrician and parents to arrange for transfer to the NCU, where testing and IV antibiotics could be administered.

Because of Sara's proactive steps, the baby's infection was caught early. Within 48 hours, her white blood cell count reduced, her band counts were resolved, and she was discharged home healthy. Kudos!

Baltimore Magazine Excellence in Nursing Awards



Every May, *Baltimore* magazine publishes its annual "Excellence in Nursing" list. It honors nurses who practice all over the greater Baltimore area who go above and beyond the call of duty. Nominations are submitted by healthcare professionals and patients, and are reviewed by a panel of nursing advisors and leaders who understand the complexities today's nurses face in their day-to-day work.

We are incredibly proud that MedStar Harbor Hospital was represented on the list in 2023,

with four nurses earning recognition. We congratulate and thank each for their outstanding contributions to MedStar Harbor Hospital and the delivery of excellence in nursing for the patients we serve.

Pictured left to right: Dorothy "DJ" Jones, RN; Leif Coble, MSN, RN, BC; Lena Sutch, MSN, RN, CEN; and Sarah Bayne, MSN, FNP, CN, ACHPN.

Impact Award

Presented to Dorothy Jones, RN, Newborn Admission Nurse

The Impact Award recognizes a nurse who is successful in communicating and implementing MedStar Health nursing goals and processes. Recognized for her commitment to going above and beyond for newborns at MedStar Harbor Hospital, Dorothy “DJ” Jones, RN, newborn admission nurse and chair of the Women and Infants’ Unit Based Council, was the recipient of the 2023 Impact Award. Consistently striving to provide the highest quality care to the hospital’s most vulnerable patient population, Dorothy was honored for her initiative to reduce newborn screening samples rejected by the Maryland Department of Health. She provided staff with educational in-service sessions to raise awareness of and identify solutions for this issue, effectively reducing the number of errors in newborn screenings by more than 50 percent over three months.



100% Certified in Labor & Delivery



On July 1, 2022, MedStar Health announced a goal, calling for all labor and delivery nurses from across the healthcare system to obtain Electronic Fetal Monitoring (EFM) Certification, within one year. The organization invested in the appropriate educational materials and processes to support nurses as they prepared for their certification exams, and engaged women’s health leaders and nurse professional development specialists from across the organization.

Courses from The Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) were provided, along with web-based resources and printed study binders. EFM strip reviews and an interactive AWHONN EFM online game helped

MedStar Harbor nurses learn, while also having some fun. EFM certification was positioned as a key departmental priority, and reinforced through ongoing nursing professional development specialist rounds, leadership communication, and discussion during team huddles and staff meetings.

“We are very proud that we achieved 100 percent EFM certification among our team of experienced labor and delivery nurses, and have put systems in place to guide new nursing graduates and new-to-practices nurses, so they can pass the exam as well,” said Dawn Poythress, RNC-OB, BSN. “This is an achievement that required time, energy, and commitment. But we did it!”

Beyond the Pandemic

The New Era of Nursing



The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the nursing profession in profound ways but the nursing team at MedStar Harbor Hospital is stronger today than ever before.

“We learned to work better together, adapt, depend on each other more, and work as a cohesive team,” said Lori Casey, MSN, BSN, RN, patient care services director from the hospital’s resource and capacity management team.

Additionally, working through the pandemic and its various phases of patient surges encouraged leaders at MedStar Harbor Hospital and across the entire MedStar Health system to reevaluate existing care delivery models, and identify solutions for the future.

Integration of LPNs in the ED

Rosina Gonzales, MSN, RN, assistant director of nursing in the Emergency Department at MedStar Harbor Hospital, explained that adoption of a revised model of care has been vital.

“In the post-pandemic landscape, integrating licensed practical nurses (LPNs) into our model of care has been a system-wide initiative and the ED embraced the transformation,” she said. “At the system level, we are thinking of everything—how to delegate, how to orient new staff, what competencies should be completed, how job descriptions should be written, and what language should apply as we develop and communicate new policies. On the unit level, we are working to define the scope of work LPNs can take on, to support each nursing team.”

Rosina says the integration of LPNs has taken place with tremendous support from leadership, ongoing education, and lots of communication amongst care teams during daily huddles.

“Giving bedside staff a voice was essential for our collective success as was taking a multidisciplinary approach that included providers,” explained Rosina. “We are excited about what the future of nursing looks like, and we are remaining flexible and open to new and alternative processes to provide first-in-class care to our patients.”

Nursing in the post-pandemic era

During and after the pandemic, the nursing shortage reached critical levels but is starting to shift in the post-pandemic era.

“Former and new nurses are coming back, wanting a home, wanting to be part of a team,” said Lori, adding that the hospital’s focus on wellness for nurses has been another important post-pandemic change. “The wellness initiatives have ensured nurses are cared for and are taking care of themselves. Nurses are more prepared and more adaptable now, and that’s what is needed in today’s patient care environment.”

Nurturing Nursing Excellence Through Education

Over the past several years, nursing education and professional development at MedStar Harbor Hospital has transformed into a robust program, providing nurses in all stages of their careers with the tools and opportunities needed to learn, grow, and advance in their profession.

Education to support the future

With the development of the Student Nurse Extern (SNE) Program, and the Student Nurse Assistant (SNA) Program nursing students have gained valuable hands-on clinical experience under the guidance of experienced nurses.

“This type of learning and mentorship is important during the earlier stages of a nurse’s education,” explained Lena Sutch, MSN, RN, CEN, nursing professional development specialist and SNE coordinator. “Getting students into the clinical environment earlier helps to socialize them to the units and provides exposure to different types of nursing at the hospital.”

The 2023 summer nurse extern cohort, for example, was a 10-week program that combined clinical time, skills workshops, and lectures. The conclusion of the cohort included a special project, which externs from both MedStar Harbor Hospital and MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center completed through four simulation exercises, as a fun way to apply their learning.

Similarly, the hospital’s Nurse Residency Program (NRP) provides newly graduated nurses with the confidence and competencies needed to transition into professional practice. MedStar Harbor Hospital’s NRP, which was launched in 2015, continues to evolve as it works toward achieving accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Sherry Reisler, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, who started the program, has found that graduates are more independent and confident in their skills.



Learning and professional development is an ongoing journey

Each year, nurses at MedStar Harbor Hospital can participate in 10 certification review courses, which are sponsored by the system Chief Nursing Officers. The review courses along with generous education reimbursement options have contributed to an improvement in nursing certification and BSN rates.

Additionally, MedStar Health’s Simulation Training and Education Lab (SiTEL) offers valuable educational resources for associates. Nurses also have access to a clinical advancement program (CAP).

“Our educational offerings and academic practice partnerships are vital components of the hospital’s commitment to assuring professional development opportunities for our team,” said Beth Kilmoyer, DNP, MS, RN-BC, director of nursing professional development and education. “These efforts are important because without a doubt, a career in nursing requires constant growth.”

Nursing Informatics—The Intersection of Nursing and Innovation



Bridging the gap between nursing practice and technology, the Nursing Informatics team at MedStar Harbor Hospital always has an eye on what is coming down the innovation pike. They collaborate with nurses to design and implement technology solutions that promote efficiency, safety, and quality.

“Just about everything that’s coming through nursing at this point has some sort of technology initiative attached to it,” explained Leif Coble, MSN, RN-BC, clinical nursing informaticist. “We’re the liaisons between our bedside nurses and the software and hardware vendors and developers.”

All technology investments are made in alignment with what teams need in order to efficiently care for patients.

“Nurse informaticists bring new solutions to the table to better accommodate the needs of the community and the hospital so we can provide more efficient, safe care in new and different ways,” said Gigi Teklu, MSN, RN, CEN, clinical nursing informaticist. “We work with the technology to make it applicable to what we do in nursing.”

Launching new applications is a team effort

A great deal of work goes into the launch of a new technology from the design phase to testing a new application. The goal is to ensure what is developed is workable for nurses and healthcare professionals throughout the hospital. Extensive training and hands-on education are important parts of the pre-launch process.

“We partner with our nursing professional development team to ensure all nurses receive the training needed to implement these new applications,” said Sharon Bonner, MS, RN-BC, director of clinical informatics.

The Command Center, staffed with nursing informaticists and vendor support members, serves as the technical support center during the Go-Live phase as new technologies are introduced.

“We provide hands-on education and assistance in the Command Center, helping to resolve any issues that may arise so that the technology rollout can be as smooth as possible,” said Gigi.

Key achievements during Fiscal Year 2023

- Capacity Management is a new throughput application providing real-time patient location updates.
- Blood and breast milk scanning ensures the right patient gets the right blood or breast milk product with a bar code scan.
- Assignment Manager allows teams to make caregiver assignments digitally, improving communication of patient care assignments on the units.
- Witness scanning improves efficiency and the patient experience by eliminating multiple blood draws when a type and screen is needed.

Exceeding Key Metrics

During Fiscal Year 2023, MedStar Harbor Hospital achieved the highest quality metrics in the MedStar Health system. Our performance ranked “Top Quartile and Above” in 14 out of 17 key quality indicators—a significant mark of improvement from Fiscal Year 2022, when MedStar Harbor Hospital had just five measures in the “Top Quartile and Above” ranking.

“These exceptional results are due to the tremendous efforts of our team, and our collective commitment to optimizing quality in our patient care environments,” said Karen Elliott, DNP, MHA, RN, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services at MedStar Harbor Hospital. “We saw ongoing improvement throughout the year, and are so proud to stand as an organizational leader when it comes to quality improvement within our healthcare system.”





In the Community

Having a presence in the community is important to our nursing team. We participate in events throughout the year to help our friends and neighbors make their health a top priority.



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