In a year of crisis, we continued providing high-quality, safe, and empathetic care.
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Special thanks to everyone who contributed
to this issue of Caring.

Our nurses practice at many AHN facilities
and these locations:

Allegheny General Hospital
Allegheny Valley Hospital
Canonsburg Hospital
Forbes Hospital
AHN Grove City
Jefferson Hospital
Saint Vincent Hospital
Westfield Memorial Hospital
West Penn Hospital
Citizens School of Nursing
West Penn School of Nursing

On the cover

Ruthie Banks, BSN, RN
Registered Nurse,
AHN Wexford Health + Wellness Pavilion
Message from the chief nurse executive

Welcome to Caring, the 2020 Nursing Annual Report from Allegheny Health Network (AHN). The year 2020 was declared as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife by the World Health Organization. It also marked the 200th birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

As we set out to celebrate all nurses throughout the year, the global pandemic emerged and our focus pivoted. Just as Florence Nightingale was faced with unknown circumstances in the Crimean War, nurses at AHN were pressed into their own type of war — fighting a virus that presented quickly and unpredictably.

In this annual report, you will learn how the nurses of AHN responded to the pandemic, all while ensuring every patient, regardless of their diagnosis, continued to receive high-quality, compassionate care.

The crisis of the pandemic did not define us as nurses, it magnified us. The elements of nursing practice became part of daily conversations, elevating the discussion around the value nursing brings to health care transformation. AHN nurses were front and center in that discussion.

At AHN, we are committed to the professional development, safety, security, and wellness of all nurses, no matter where they practice. We recognize that every nurse contributes to the excellent patient outcomes we consistently produce and the outstanding experience our patients expect and appreciate.

AHN nurse leaders are instrumental in executing a nursing strategy that supports nurses at the bedside, in education, transitioning care, or conducting research. We celebrate the contributions of all nurses.

I continue to be honored to lead the nurses of Allegheny Health Network. Their dedication to nursing practice and the profession is remarkable. As innovative, committed, and skillful practitioners, their practice has a direct impact on the patients and families of AHN that we are privileged to serve across western Pennsylvania and beyond.

Whether during a global pandemic or in the everyday work of delivering high-quality care, AHN nurses are the greatest, and they make the greatest difference.

Sincerely,

Claire M. Zangerle,
DNP, MSN, MBA, RN,
NEA-BC, FAONL;
Chief Nurse Executive,
Allegheny Health Network
We inspire all nurses to lead

Nurses across the network, no matter where they practice, are leaders. They are active in health care transformation while concurrently responding to the needs of patients. AHN nurse leaders support the work of staff through various initiatives that give all nurses a voice.

Bringing a new hospital onboard

In late 2019, AHN Grove City joined the network as our ninth owned hospital. Geographically, the hospital provides a new access point for high-quality, acute care services for communities between the Pittsburgh and Erie regions. Early in the relationship, the AHN executive nursing team welcomed Grove City nurse leaders to the team.

Nursing town hall meetings in Erie

A core value of AHN nurse leaders is ensuring a connection with frontline staff. We showed this value in action at the nursing town hall meetings conducted at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital. Chief Nursing Officer Sallie Piazza, BSN, MS, CNML, CNOR, convened more than 40% of frontline nurses and clinical staff across the nursing divisions. Staff participated in discussions of quality, safety, patient experience, and employee engagement.

Community support and serenity rooms

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our communities showered AHN Nursing staff with a variety of kind gestures — meals, snacks, and cards — that provided immense support in a difficult time. As a result, the staff were able to better focus on the work in front of them.

Generous donations from the community and AHN leaders were used to create hospital-based serenity rooms where staff could decompress and enjoy a moment of solitude. Equipped with massage chairs, aromatherapy, snacks, and salt lamps, these rooms served as a welcome respite for the nursing staff.

Nurses are there whenever they are needed, and the community reciprocated that need. And that made all the difference.

Cultivating a diverse workforce

Even before the racial unrest of 2020, AHN recognized the value of a diverse nursing leadership team and nursing workforce and the effort we would need to make to achieve our goals. As part of this workforce strategy, we created the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council of AHN Nursing.

Nurses from across the network make up the membership in order to cultivate a diverse and inclusive nursing workforce that represents our patient population. The DEI Council is charged with identifying tactics to develop and sustain a strong culture of diversity in nursing. Our focus is on recruitment, retention, mentoring, career development, and leadership. In 2021, hospital-based DEI Councils will carry out this strategic work at a local level.

“We will enhance and cultivate nursing diversity, equity, and inclusion at AHN.”

— Claire M. Zangerle
DNP, MSN, MBA, RN, FAONL, NEA-BC; Chief Nurse Executive, AHN
Our communities overwhelmed us with their support.

MARIA DIAZ CHATLAK, BSN, RN, OCN
Nursing Professional Development Generalist, AHN West Penn Hospital
We team up for growth and change.

We support ongoing efforts by nurses who take charge of improving processes and seize opportunities that transform health care.

Setting the standard for the nursing team

AHN nurses recognize they are not alone in caring for patients. It takes an entire team to deliver the high-quality care our patients have come to expect.

Nursing assistants are significant contributors to the team. To recognize their valuable work and create consistent expectations, it was important that they have an appropriate title. Their new title, patient care technician (PCT), is more descriptive of the work they perform. In both words and actions, this change elevates these members of the team and provides opportunity for certification and career advancement, enhancing staff engagement and satisfaction. The PCT job category now includes three levels, including:

- **PCT1**: Entry level, providing care at the bedside in collaboration with their nurse partner.
- **PCT2**: Mid-level, providing a higher level of care, such as foley catheter insertions and removal, simple dressing changes, and phlebotomy.
- **PCT3**: Highest level, partnering with bedside nurses and filling critical needs in higher acuity units to manage cardiac monitors, transport low acuity telemetry patients, and start IVs.

Most areas will transition from the Nursing Assistant job category to the Patient Care Technician category in 2021.

ROBERTA RUBISH, BSN, RN, CPN
Clinical Manager,
AHN Wexford Health + Wellness Pavilion
Following up with emergency department (ED) patients by phone

During the initial surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, AHN planned for a dramatic decrease in ED visits. Given the care coordination demanded for high-acuity patients presenting to the ED during that time, patients who presented for nonemergent reasons were sent home without as much coordination.

Early on, AHN Nursing led efforts to create a team of case managers, social workers, and clinical support staff to provide timely follow-up with those patients. Through the development of a simple dashboard with specific elements (patient demographics, risk, access to a primary care physician, and diagnosis), teams were able to prioritize patient calls. During these calls, staff focused on medication accessibility, isolation issues, home care needs, and social determinants of health, such as transportation and food insecurity.

In addition, the teams assisted with access to the AHN electronic medical record, MyChart, and primary care physician follow-up. Partnering with AHN Care Connect, the teams logged more than 3,500 individual interventions. The assistance provided through this initiative made a significant difference in the lives of those we serve. This work continues today.

3,500 individual interventions
Celebrating our Nepalese community

AHN Saint Vincent Hospital is fortunate to have a robust Nepalese community working in the organization. To celebrate and honor their culture, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, chaired by Maria Patino-Giraldo, BSN, RN, CMSRN, organized a full week of activities for the staff, patients, and visitors to learn more about this wonderful community. By discussing and sharing traditions, ethnic foods, and general information, we increased cultural awareness and provided a global perspective to all.

AHN Nursing welcomes licensed practical nurses (LPN)

AHN Nursing recognizes the value of LPNs in practice. As the organization sought to best use the skills of all staff, we focused on hiring more LPNs in our hospitals in 2020. We revised policies to reflect the current scope of LPN practice and enable LPNs to practice at the top of their license. AHN Saint Vincent Hospital led the network in hiring LPNs in areas such as behavioral health, med-surg, float pool, cardiac, intensive care, clinical decision, and telemetry units.

Partners in learning — AHN and Capella University

Providing educational opportunities to AHN nurses is at the foundation of engaging employees and ensuring the delivery of high-quality patient care. This is why AHN Nursing partners with Capella University on a direct tuition reimbursement initiative that lets AHN Nurses pursue a BSN with no out-of-pocket expenses. Led by Jennifer Schroeter, DNP, MS, MLHR, RN, director, nursing innovation and performance development, this resulted in 47 BSN graduations and 15 BSN starts in 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a similar, short-term program for MSN students was offered by Capella University. As a result, 10 nurses enrolled.

AHN Nursing professional development efforts resulted in:

- A 7% increase in BSN prepared nurses.
- A 6% increase in professional nursing certification.

7% increase in BSNs and a 6% increase in certification

AHN NURSES ENROLLED IN CAPELLA UNIVERSITY YTD AS OF 11/19/2020

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AHN NURSING BSN RATES AND CERTIFICATION

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<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>19%</td>
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Professional development — climbing the clinical ladder

In 2020, nurses from Allegheny Valley and Canonsburg hospitals joined all other AHN hospitals in our Clinical Nurse Advancement program, known as the Clinical Ladder.

Many nurses moved up the ladder after achieving a BSN or their professional certification. Preparing their portfolio for this program allowed them to reflect on their patient care experiences and inspire everyone who attended the interview sessions.

In 2020, we developed the Surgical Technologist Clinical Ladder Advancement Program (ST-CLAP) as a voluntary program to allow STs to demonstrate clinical excellence, bedside leadership, and apply our core behaviors through peer evaluations, a written portfolio, and interview. The program helped us improve patient outcomes, encourage career advancement, attract and retain qualified staff, and recognize outstanding clinical practice and leadership.

AHN CLINICAL LADDER NURSES

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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LANEY ALLEN, BSN, RN
Registered Nurse, AHN Allegheny General Hospital
AHN CLINICAL LADDER NURSES 2019-2020

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<th>JH</th>
<th>SVH</th>
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<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>48</td>
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AHN CLINICAL LADDER NURSES BY LEVEL 2020

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<th>SVH</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
We focus on empathy and safety

New knowledge enhances nursing practice and improves our ability to ensure that patients come first while delivering high quality care. This was especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Connecting patients to families during isolation

During the early stages of the pandemic, necessary restrictions on visitation deprived patients of the emotional and therapeutic support provided by family and visitors.

AHN nurses responded with a solution to this dilemma. Together with the patient experience and information technology staff, an innovative team of nurses deployed more than 200 iPads and Android devices to support virtual patient-family communication. At AHN Jefferson Hospital, nursing formed a team that created a process for this virtual communication, alleviating stress on the patient and family. Using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) methodology to ensure a sustainable solution, the nursing team gathered feedback from patients.
Staff nurses created a process and a new role — the Connection Rounder. As a result:

- Patients were able to connect with family via Zoom, Facetime, or Skype, and were very grateful.
- Staff nurses expressed that they felt supported while the Connection Rounder met the emotional needs of the patients and their loved ones.
- Families were able to see their loved ones and communicate daily, easing their worry and anxiety about the care of the patient.

As the process matured, we added more Connection Rounders along with daily team briefings. Daily visits allowed Connection Rounders to:

- Assess a patient’s isolation and feelings, and initiate interventions to support healthy coping.
- Establish MyChart access and set up patients for post-discharge video visits with their physician.
- Use technology to create virtual touchpoints for patients with those involved in their care.

Within two months of implementation, AHN Jefferson Hospital saw an increase in patient satisfaction scores. “Rate the Hospital 0–10” climbed from 71.1% to 83%. Local media picked up the story of the Connection Rounders, who aimed to utilize technology to enhance existing support systems or create new ones as the patient returns home.

Families set eyes on their loved ones and communicated daily.
Keeping nurses safe – personal protective equipment (PPE)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of our nursing team was of utmost importance. Given the volatility of the virus and many unknown factors, infection prevention was essential. N100 masks became the gold standard when caring for suspected or infected patients. These masks required individual fit testing to ensure they were worn properly. Over a few short weeks, AHN nurses fit tested more than 3,250 staff across the network. Perioperative nurses, the nursing education team, and nursing quality coaches led the effort, which included donning and doffing of PPE and an overview of respiratory precautions.

We fit tested 3,271 staff for N100 industrial masks.

At AHN Allegheny General Hospital, staff had been using the powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) to care for patients under airborne precautions. Because of this, many staff had not been fit tested for any masks. Over six weeks, the nursing team conducted fit testing on more than 2,000 staff members for N95 masks.

Fighting COVID-19 while staying safe

When the nation was faced with the novel coronavirus in early 2020, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was changing rapidly. AHN Nursing, with leadership from nursing quality coaches from AHN Allegheny General Hospital, trained staff on:

- Proper donning and doffing of PPE.
- Sending blood and specimens to the lab.
- Disposing of linen and garbage.
- Transporting and discharging patients.

Educated 1,400 nurses and frontline workers in the proper use of PPE.

By posting information on the outside of each droplet or airborne isolation room, the nursing team was able to visually manage proper PPE utilization, using descriptive photos of the proper equipment needed to enter the room. These visuals provided ease of understanding and kept staff protected and safe. The nurse educators and nursing quality coaches provided multiple demonstrations and education sessions. Each inpatient unit was divided between the nurse educators and the nursing quality coaches to ensure the delivery of face-to-face education. In the process, more than 1,400 nurses and frontline staff were educated.
Celebrating great nursing

AHN honors our nurses at all levels for their contributions to our patients and community.

We recognize and appreciate nurses at AHN in a variety of ways, including:

• Annual Cameos of Caring® awards — celebrating excellence in nursing across western Pennsylvania.
• The DAISY Award® and BEE Award® — honoring nurses and nursing support at AHN hospitals and the Allegheny Clinic.
• Department awards — given by AHN and Highmark executive and hospital leaders.

Cameos of Caring

In 2020, exceptional bedside nurses were recognized with the Cameos of Caring Award. While the official ceremony was postponed until spring 2021, we still took the opportunity to recognize these 2020 general honorees at each facility.

**Allegheny General Hospital:**
Veronica Stanley, AD, RN

**Allegheny Valley Hospital:**
Kristin Skledar, RN

**Canonsburg Hospital:**
Maryann Patterson, RN

**Forbes Hospital:**
Gavin Louis Bordogna, BSN, RN, PHRN

**Jefferson Hospital:**
Dean Huwe, BSN, RN

**Saint Vincent Hospital:**
Maria Ines Patino Giraldo, BSN, RN, CMSRN

**Advanced Practice:**
Susan M. Leininger, MSN, RN, Allegheny General Hospital
Marissa Layne Eaton, MSN, BSN, AGACNP, Jefferson Hospital

**Case Manager:**
Anna Liza Regana, BSN, RN, Allegheny General Hospital

**Quality and Safety:**
Dana Capone, AD, RN, Allegheny General Hospital
Pamela Hedderman, BSN, RN, WOCN, West Penn Hospital

**Nurse Educator:**
Aleksandra Stojanovic, MSN, RN, West Penn Hospital School of Nursing

2020 Excellence in Nursing Awards from Pittsburgh Magazine

Annually, Pittsburgh Magazine recognizes outstanding nurses in Western Pennsylvania by celebrating their contributions to health care. In 2020 it also recognized those who played a vital role during the pandemic.

**Awardees in 2020 included:**
Claire Zangerle, DNP, MSN, MBA, NEA-BC, FAONL, Winner, Nursing Leadership
Jeffrey Bomba, MSN, MBA, RN, NE-BC, Honorable Mention, Emerging Leader
Shannon Tully, BSN, RN, Honorable Mention, Pandemic Response Hero
From left,

PAMELA STEGMAN, MSN, RN
Nurse Manager

AMANDA BELACASTRO, RN
Registered Nurse

ALEXANDRA CHEROK, BSN, RN
Assistant Nurse Manager

all of AHN West Penn Hospital.
JULIA ODHUNO, BSN, RN
Registered Nurse, AHN Jefferson Hospital,
with her son Caisy Olwal
**True health care heroes — comic book style**

The World Health Organization declared 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, honoring Florence Nightingale’s 200th birthday. As COVID-19 tested health care organizations across the globe, nurses emerged as real-life heroes.

During the worst public health crisis in a century, nurses in all practice areas put themselves at risk to save lives and ultimately stop the spread of the virus. Across the country, nurses were being hailed and recognized as heroes. At AHN, we took the label of hero to heart by partnering with Marvel to create a unique comic book, “The Vitals.” Inspired by the true stories of nurses at AHN hospitals, this comic book illustrated the extraordinary work of nurses through the iconic lens of Marvel. While stories focused on specific nurses in the network, they were representative of all nurses at AHN.

“COVID-19 challenged our nurses professionally and emotionally. We know many of them have given their best while under great stress. They are, hands down, heroes. We are excited to honor them in such a unique and powerful way with ‘The Vitals,’” said Claire Zangerle, DNP, MSN, MBA, NEA-BC, FAONL, chief nurse executive, AHN.

**AHN Jefferson Hospital: Next stop, Magnet designation.**

Magnet® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) is an international recognition that’s the most prestigious honor for nursing excellence. AHN Jefferson Hospital is on the way to designation by submitting documents for the survey. We expect that the survey will be conducted in mid-2021.
EGYPTIANA BASA, RN
Registered Nurse,
AHN West Penn Hospital
We always seek a better way

Innovation is essential to health care transformation. AHN nurses continuously seek ways to implement more efficient processes that lead to lower costs and improved patient care.

Supplementing PPE with the elastomeric mask program

Global shortages of PPE led AHN perioperative nursing to innovate by launching the Elastomeric Mask Program. This program consisted of:

- Implementing an emergency use authorization (EUA) to resterilize N95 masks.
- Allocating and training staff on using P100 masks relative to risk of exposure at nine AHN hospitals and all ambulatory surgical centers. This resulted in reduced reliance on N95s.
- Creating a process and related training materials on the collection, decontamination, and redistribution of masks.

“It’s a critical issue, so we are ensuring we are doing all we can to provide staff with the protection that’s needed,” said Hope Waltenbaugh, MSN, RN, CNOR, NE-BC, AHN vice president of surgical services.

AHN was granted $385,000 by the CDC and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to study the Elastomeric Mask Program. Over the period of the study, the program successfully reduced the number of N95s needed throughout the network by 95% and demonstrated costs 10 times lower than the monthly expenditure on N95s. Results were published in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons.

AHN holds “The Year of the Nurse” 19th Annual Nursing Symposium

The 19th Annual Nursing Symposium, offered in October 2020, provided information and evidence-based research on 14 topics from 35 presenters.

Nurse physician partnerships build strong teams

The Nurse Physician Partnership, launched in 2019, continues to foster collaboration, innovation, and clinical leadership.

As a result of their partnership, the perioperative triad of Heather Myers, MSN, BSN, RN, Dr. Michael Dishart, and Dr. Timothy Sauber at AHN Allegheny General Hospital realized an increase in open communication, trust, and positive team culture between nurses and physicians. Their success prompted them to expand the model to all perioperative areas, adding 11 new dyads to the initiative.

The dyad partnership in the cardiovascular intensive care unit at AHN West Penn Hospital — Marci Youngmark, MSN, CRNP, ACNPC-AG, CCRN, TCRN, and Dr. Daniel Cormican — resulted in the purchase of the Arctic Sun® 5000 Temperature Management System to support the care of post-cardiac arrest patients. The project led to a reduction in the utilization of central line placement and has proven beneficial during the pandemic in limiting the amount of time nurses spend in patient rooms.

95% reduction in masks needed throughout AHN.
RENEE GAMBREL, MT/NA
Patient Care/Monitor Tech II,
AHN West Penn Hospital
We pursue excellence

Our work toward our goal to improve quality continued in 2020 with AHN nurses at the forefront of developing new strategies to reduce infections and maintain the highest quality of care.

Quality improvement propels innovation

Councils and teams across the network played a major role in continuous quality improvement seen in all nurse-sensitive indicators. Through detailed root-cause analysis and solution design, AHN Nursing created targeted interventions, delivering results at the unit level. NDNQI® nurse-sensitive indicator performance for 2018 Q3 through 2020 Q2 showed a high percentage of units that outperformed the NDNQI benchmark, as follows:

- 92% outperform for CAUTI
- 96% outperform for CLABSI
- 69% outperform for Falls
- 94% outperform for HAPI
ZACHERY ALLAN, MS, BSN, RN, CEN, PHRN
Nurse Manager,
AHN Jefferson Hospital
NDNQI NURSE-SENSITIVE INDICATOR PERFORMANCES, 2018 Q3 – 2020 Q2

**CATHETER ASSOCIATED URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (CAUTI)**

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<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>JH</td>
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<td>SVH</td>
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<td>WPH</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHN Nursing Overall</td>
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**FALLS WITH INJURY**

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<td>AHN Nursing Overall</td>
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**CENTRAL LINE ASSOCIATED BLOOD STREAM INFECTIONS (CLABSI)**

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<td>AHN Nursing Overall</td>
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**HOSPITAL ACQUIRED PRESSURE INJURIES STAGE 2 AND ABOVE (HAPI)**

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<td>AHN Nursing Overall</td>
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Language accessibility and nondiscrimination

Allegheny Health Network (AHN) complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex in its health programs and services. In order to treat individuals in a nondiscriminatory manner, AHN provides free communication aids and language assistance services.