

CCIFIC nurses making a difference

Supporting AHN nurses to be strong and resilient, as they provide safe, high-quality patient care.

In this issue

Transformational leadership, pg. 4

Structural empowerment, pg. 8

Exemplary professional practice, pg. 12

Meaningful recognition, pg. 16

Knowledge, innovation, and improvements, pg. 20

Quality outcomes, pg. 24

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

Wexford Hospital

Citizens School of Nursing

West Penn School of Nursing

On the cover

Tinamarie Estes-Washington, DNP, MSN, RN, PCCN

Director of Nursing AHN Forbes Hospital

Message from the chief nurse executive

Welcome to Caring, the 2021 Nursing Annual Report from Allegheny Health Network (AHN). The COVID-19 pandemic continued to place enormous stress on just about everyone in the world. We've seen the effects of this virus in every industry, social setting, and educational institution. However, we have really felt the stress in our nursing care teams, globally and locally.

In 2021, our caregivers focused on taking care of the community — not only treating patients who contracted COVID-19, but administering lifesaving vaccines to mitigate the spread of the virus. The excitement of the vaccines gave us great hope. Our caregivers stepped up and took the vaccines themselves, ensuring they could stay healthy. Even with the hope of the vaccine, our nurses continued to feel the stress of the demands placed on them from staffing challenges and stretched resources. It's been two years since the pandemic started, but our nurses have responded with courage, skill, unending compassion — and amazing flexibility.

This annual report of our activities in 2021 describes how AHN nurses continued to practice high-quality nursing care, despite all the obstacles. They took advantage of personal and professional development opportunities, enhancing their ability to perform well and take pride in their practice. We made an extra effort to promote self-care for all members of

the nursing teams, ensuring a focus on emotional health and personal well-being.

From a heightened focus on diversity and inclusion across AHN, to opening a new state-of-the-art hospital in Wexford, to the new MentoRNurses program we launched, the nurse's voice was heard. I'm so proud of the teams at Jefferson Hospital, who, despite the pandemic, added a second Magnet® designation to AHN's hospitals. I hope you are moved and inspired by all these stories.

It's with a grateful heart that I speak for our leadership team to the thousands of AHN nurses and nursing care team members who have chosen to stay with us and chosen us as their nursing practice destination. You are serving your communities and demonstrating an indomitable spirit in the face of unrelenting challenges. Thank you.



Sincerely,

Claire M. Zangerle,

DNP, RN, MBA, NEA-BC,

FAONL, FAAN;

Chief Nurse Executive,

Allegheny Health

Network

Leaders on the front lines

We support our nurse managers as they help their teams care for patients, through staffing initiatives, training, and diversity programs.

Volunteers step up to give vaccines

When the COVID-19 vaccine emerged in early 2021, many people felt a palpable sense of relief and gratitude, and were eager to get their shots. To meet this huge demand, AHN partnered with the Pittsburgh Pirates®. Many AHN nurses volunteered for vaccination clinics at PNC Park where we provided an average of 3,500 vaccines a day. Similar clinics, also run with help from AHN nurse volunteers, were held at DICK's Sporting Goods® in Cranberry Township, shopping malls, convention centers, and every AHN hospital.

"To date, we've vaccinated over 400,000 people."

— Alicia LaPalombara, MSHCPM Director of Network Nursing Operations

"To date, we've vaccinated over 400,000 people, a huge undertaking, and very rewarding," noted Alicia LaPalombara, MSHCPM, director of Network Nursing Operations for AHN. "It was really touching, since this was the first time a lot of people had been around others since the pandemic began. The community was so grateful and appreciative."





Loyalty rewarded

To provide sufficient nursing support during periods of pandemic-related staffing shortfalls, AHN Nursing started the Extra Shift Incentive Program (ESHIP). ESHIP recognized and rewarded the dedication of our nurses who voluntarily committed to additional inpatient shifts. It gave them an opportunity to earn an incentive bonus by working up to three additional inpatient shifts each week during a preset time frame.

We were thrilled to see 396 nurses participate in the first phase of the program, covering 3,015 nursing shifts over six weeks, and 240 nurses in the second phase, covering 2,316 shifts over eight weeks.

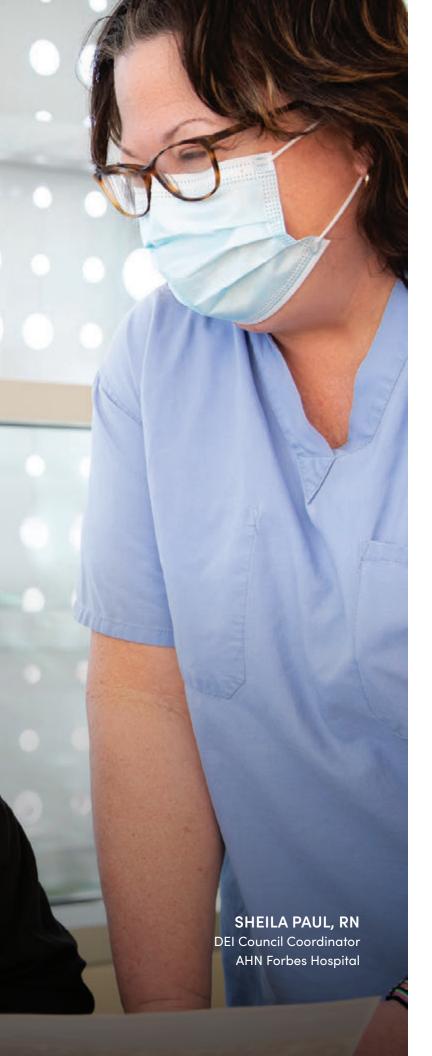
Someone who looks like me, taking care of me

AHN Nursing continues to build diversity through the Nursing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council, now in its second year. DEI creates a safe space to discuss cultural issues, according to DEI Council Co–chair Tinamarie Estes, DNP, MSN, RN, PCCN, and nurses can acknowledge when we could all be more sensitive and create a more inclusive environment.

"We're helping our nurses get comfortable being a little uncomfortable."

— Tinamarie Estes-Washington DNP, MSN, RN, PCCN





"We're helping our nurses get comfortable being a little uncomfortable, on the path to building a more equitable team," she said.

In 2021, we trained nurse leaders in inclusivity, celebrated diverse cultures, and planned a month-long awareness campaign for 2022 across all nursing units. DEI task forces at most of our hospitals focus on nurturing a strong culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within nursing. The remaining three hospitals will launch their DEI task forces in 2022.

Finding time, solving stress

Our nurse leaders provide consistent support to their nurses, and often take on patient assignments to help shoulder the burden of the staffing challenge. In 2021, we looked for extra ways to support them in this task.

In spring 2021, we invited nurse leaders to attend a 21-day time management course, led by a professional psychologist. They learned to reduce stress and build tangible skills to help them tackle the many daily challenges they face. Following the training, survey results showed that 76% of nurse leaders felt the majority of their tasks were completed at the end of a day, as compared to 36% prior to the course.

To keep the momentum going, nurse leaders receive critical updates at a weekly Nurse Leader Meeting hosted by Chief Nurse Executive Claire Zangerle, DNP, MSN, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAONL. Nurses can also ask questions and celebrate their achievements.



Professional growth at every level

When nurses keep learning, they advance their skills and knowledge, gaining confidence and promoting satisfaction.

Mentoring nurses to avoid burnout

To address the elevated levels of stress and burnout for many in the health care professions, AHN created the MentoRNurses program. Through MentoRNurses, senior leader mentors support nurse manager mentees to increase their knowledge and skills, and help them meet their goals.

The effort recruited 26 pairs of mentors and mentees. They worked on active listening, setting clear mentor/mentee expectations, motivating staff, and other areas. Outcomes will be measured through competency self-evaluation and pre- and-post program evaluations by mentors and mentees, providing feedback for future cohorts.

Expanding medical assistant certification

The year 2021 brought into sharp focus the difficulty in recruiting and retaining medical assistants (MA). It forced us to think creatively about how to help nurses' aides, ambulance crews, and others with MA skills and qualifications to gain MA certification.

AHN partnered with the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) to create a six-month online program to prepare such individuals for certification, paying for tuition and materials for the first class of 16 students.

Participants who passed the final exam earned status as certified clinical medical assistants, a nationally recognized designation. They have committed to work for AHN for two years. We hope these will be the first of many groups as we continue this program.

A sneak peak at a nursing career

To seek out those with the heart and desire to be nurses, AHN implemented a new program, the Paraprofessional Path to Nursing. The program accepts students fresh out of high school or those who want to start down a new career path. It offers a structured, sneak preview of what a nurse or patient care technician (PCT) does during a typical day.

Through 24 hours of virtual training, using modules developed specifically for AHN, participants get a taste of the many roles nurses play across our system, through interactive, simulated patient scenarios. Modules cover topics related to patient care, bathing, wound care, vital signs, and caring conversations. Demand for these sessions remains constant, with a retention rate of 93%, which guides more candidates to consider the nursing profession.

The climb to lifelong learning

The Clinical Ladder Advancement Program — now in place at hospitals across AHN — provides an opportunity for nurses who demonstrate superior knowledge and leadership skills to advance to higher positions. As they advance, nurses reflect on how their practice has impacted patient care, outcomes, and their own professional development.

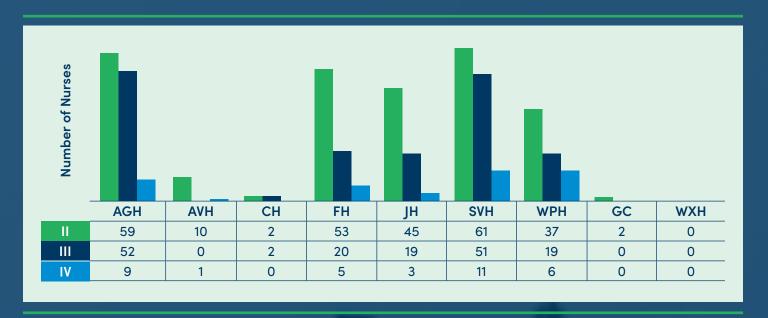
AHN CLINICAL LADDER ADVANCEMENT GROWTH

2019 2020 2021 148 293 467

AHN CLINICAL LADDER PARTICIPATION BY LEVEL



AHN CLINICAL LADDER PARTICIPATION BY LEVEL PER HOSPITAL









New ways to improve nursing

As we all worked at full throttle through the pandemic, AHN leaders found new ways to support bedside nurses.

Blended teams protect staff and patients

Blended Nursing is a refresh of the once common nursing practice, Team Nursing. In Blended Nursing, an RN lead, an LPN, and a nursing assistant care for a group of patients as a blended team, dividing tasks to allow each person to work at the top of their license.

Piloted in September 2021 at one or two large inpatient units in each hospital, the initiative has been a great success. We found that this care model allowed staff to take breaks to refresh and re-energize and to look after each other physically and emotionally.

Feedback from the staff was consistently positive, showing that even during challenging times, everyone wants to come to work and feel part of a team. A second cohort of 12 units was rolled out in January 2022, and a playbook is currently in development to widely deploy this model.



Professional development rolls on

A wide range of professional development opportunities were offered in 2021 at all levels of nursing. Here are three ways the nursing staff gained knowledge, confidence, and capabilities.

Ethical dilemmas

Nurses must often help patients, families, and other clinicians resolve dilemmas by balancing clinical, ethical, legal, and social circumstances. The Integrated Clinical Ethics Program shows nurses how to identify and address value conflicts and resolve ethical dilemmas early on.

In 2021, 63 nurses in six cohorts completed 12 interactive sessions with Dr. Gerard Magill, PhD, for continuing education credits. They learned to resolve these dilemmas beforehand, or as they emerge, ideally avoiding escalation to a formal ethics consultation. The course will be offered again in 2022.

Boosting confidence

It is essential that new nurses strongly believe in their own capabilities and performance. With this in mind, we partnered with SimpliFi® to pilot the Confidence Acceleration Program in six nursing departments at AHN Forbes Hospital in 2021.

Through a focused method over eight weeks, participants were paired with dedicated preceptors to learn:

- Policies and procedures for various tasks.
- How to gauge their abilities against set standards.
- How to continue to improve despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The first cohort showed a notable increase in confidence across the board."

— Lynn Kosar, MSN, RN, NEA-BC Chief Nursing Officer, AHN Forbes Hospital

"The first cohort showed a notable increase in confidence across the board," said Lynn Kosar, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer, AHN Forbes Hospital. SimpliFi provided targeted education to the preceptors. Each preceptor worked with two new hires at a time, taking no patient assignments of their own. Over the course of the program, new hires began with one patient each, and progressed up to six before the end of their orientation.

A survey of the first class of graduates demonstrated marked improvements in confidence, with particularly significant increases in the domains shown below. Given the success of the pilot, AHN will expand the program to more hospitals.

SIMPLIFI CONFIDENCE ACCELERATION PILOT PROGRAM RESULTS

Confidence level	Pre-survey	Post-survey	
Independently caring for patients	2.9	4.0	
Delegating patient tasks	2.8	4.0	
Contributing to patient care	3.1	4.3	

Honors for our top performers

This year, we celebrate national recognition for hospital nursing excellence and many individual awards for personal achievement.

Jefferson Hospital earns Magnet designation

AHN Jefferson Hospital is now a Magnet® designated hospital, recognized for nursing excellence from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. The three-year process to meet 60 Magnet standards was completed in 2021. Magnet is a designation owned by only 9% of all U.S. hospitals, including AHN West Penn Hospital.

What's more, AHN Jefferson Hospital earned Best-In-Class status, a rarity for a first-time Magnet hospital.

Magnet designation measures transformational leadership, structural empowerment, exemplary professional practice, and new knowledge, innovation, and improvements. It ensures the best possible care for patients, including ongoing efforts to eliminate infections, medication errors, falls, and other parameters.

"When the community comes to a Magnet hospital, they know it is exceptional," said Joy Peters, DNP, RN, MSN, MBA, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer of AHN Jefferson and Canonsburg hospitals.

"The Magnet evaluation team conducted more than 500 interviews, both inside and

outside the hospital. It was so amazing to watch this from a distance, to hear how proud our staff members are of what they do every day. It was transformational for all of us to see it come together.

"For our nurses, it meant knowing that the administration supports us in working to be the best we can be, and to give the best care possible to our patients," she said.

"It was so amazing to watch this from a distance, to hear how proud our staff members are."

— **Joy Peters**DNP, RN, MSN, MBA, NEA-BC

Walk down our Hall of Fame

Once a dull expanse of gray paint, the hallway from the Hemlock Garage into Allegheny General Hospital is now alive with bright colors, innovative ideas, staff photos, inspirational quotes, and celebrations of service.

The AGH Hall of Recognition sprang to life in 2021, to better highlight positive activity around the hospital.

"Now, people stop and look at all of the information posted along that hallway," said Marge DiCuccio, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer, AHN Allegheny General Hospital.

"You think people may not read things, but we're always hearing from employees who read the inspirational quotes and offer ideas on others we could post. This is meant to be a living display, so we're always updating and changing it. The reaction so far has been very positive."



Awards for greatness

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

Within each hospital, we regularly recognize accomplishments through:

- The DAISY Award® and BEE Award, honoring nurses and patient care technicians.
- Departmental awards from AHN, Highmark, and hospital leadership.
- Online recognition and stories shared at Nurse Leader Meetings and daily huddles.

Leading the Way Awards

During Nurses' Week in May 2021, we honored the 2021 AHN Nursing Leading the Way Award winners with a virtual ceremony.

Excellence in Advanced Practice Nursing: Lisa Hall, CRNP, MSN, CNS, FCN

Excellence in Ambulatory Nursing: Mary Altenbaugh, BSN, RN

Excellence in Ambulatory Surgery Nursing: Jesse Hixson, MSN, RN, CNOR

Excellence in Care Management: Mary Ann Planey, RN

Excellence in Evidence-Based Practice
Research: Sara Angelilli, MSN, RN, CNOR

Excellence in Nursing Education Professional Practice: Alissa Hutchins, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Excellence in Perioperative Leadership: Heather Myers, BSN, MSN, RN

Excellence in Nursing Leadership:Meredith Aumer, DNP, RN, CPEN, NE-BC

The Nightingale Lifetime Achievement Award:Robin Lovelace, MPM, BSN, RN, NE-BC

Excellence in Community Care: Cindy Vunovich, MSM, BSN, RN





2021 Excellence in Nursing Awards

Each year, Pittsburgh Magazine® recognizes nurses across western Pennsylvania for their contributions to health care. We are proud that Jeffrey Bomba, MSN, MBA, RN, NE-BC, manager of the ICU at AHN Jefferson Hospital, was honored under Excellence in Nursing – Emerging Leader.

Young Professional Voices

The American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) recognizes nurse leaders who demonstrate innovation, outstanding leadership within their organization, and significant leadership potential in health care. This fall, Sara Angelilli, MSN, RN, CNOR, was named to the 2022 AONL class of Young Professional Voices.

DAISY Nurse Leader Award

The DAISY Nurse Leader Award recognizes nurse leaders who go above and beyond in fostering an environment in which staff can thrive. This type of environment ensures high-quality standards of patient care, driving professional development, and embodying compassionate care.

This year, Marge DiCuccio, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, chief nursing officer, AHN Allegheny General Hospital, was recognized with this prestigious award.

Voices for change and progress

When nurses have input into the work they do, we all benefit from improvements to patient care.

Nurses help design AHN Wexford Hospital

"When you've had a hand in creating something, then other people build it and hand it over again to the end users, it is wildly satisfying," said Lisa Graper, MSN, RN, NE-BC, chief nursing officer, AHN Wexford. "It gives people a sense of ownership. It makes them feel proud about what they're doing and where they're doing it."

AHN Wexford opened in September 2021. As planning began four years ago, AHN included nurses and other teams who would work there in the planning process. That challenge, as Graper described it, was not only a sign of respect but also an opportunity to create a space that truly reflected the best ideas about care, efficiency, comfort, and the community.

"Multidisciplinary teams, including our nurses, were always looking at plans from the consumer's viewpoint, to make a great health care consumer experience," she noted. "As a result, AHN Wexford is a completely patient- and family-centered facility, with Magnet® designated standards throughout to help our nurses and physicians function with great convenience and effectiveness."







The hospital's physical layout tracks more closely with workflows, features greater natural light, and has spaces for privacy. There are iPads at every bedside, individualized food selection, and even a green rooftop, which helped the hospital earn LEED® green building program certification for sustainability.

Partners share efforts to improve patient care

AHN's Nurse Physician Partnership, now entering its fourth year, continues to thrive even as our teams respond to COVID-19 and staffing challenges.

Recognizing the mental and emotional toll of the pandemic, Melanie Hutcherson, BSN, RN-BC, and Dr. Timothy Bullock used their partnership to launch a processing group for nurses and physicians on the Behavioral Health Unit at AHN Jefferson Hospital. They came together to talk about difficult situations that have happened, using the principles of group therapy. After the group met, the staff felt more engaged, and we saw improvement in employee engagement from 4.03 to 4.18.

At AHN Canonsburg, Nurse Manager Colleen Glozzer, MSN, RN, and Dr. Debra Panucci made strides in improving patient experience scores around nurse and physician communication. Through a multi-pronged approach, they:

- Increased nurse leader rounds with a focus on communication boards.
- Reinforced the importance of discussing discharge plans during bedside shift report.
- Regularly reported patient experience data to their teams.
- Established a multidisciplinary approach to discharge planning.

As a result, scores on how well "nurse kept you informed" improved from 81.3 to 91.7, and scores on "doctor discussed discharge plans with you" improved from 61.6 to 75.

Good ideas keep flowing

Working with patients and physicians every day, nurses at AHN often see new ways to improve a situation. Jenna Montebell, MSN, BSN, RN, director of nursing at AHN Allegheny Valley, and Courtney Acampora, MSN, RN, nurse manager at AHN Canonsburg, began using Stoplight Reports to capture and share these ideas at the unit level.

The principle is simple. We respond to suggestions from nursing staff members with a color designation:

- Green means the idea has been accepted, acted upon, and completed.
- Yellow means the idea is either still being considered, or has been accepted but not implemented yet.
- Red means the idea cannot be implemented, along with an explanation why.

Feedback from nursing staff has been strong, and managers across the network are adopting the tool. In fact, "my opinions count" scores on the employee engagement survey climbed from 3.05 to 3.84 in one year on 3D, the pilot unit at AHN Allegheny Valley. On 2 West, the pilot unit at AHN Canonsburg, scores improved from 3.21 to 3.79.

An ongoing pursuit of excellence

Our work to achieve better patient outcomes requires AHN nurses, councils, and teams to take on important roles in continuous quality improvement.

Helping patients check out early

The sooner a patient can get back home, the better the healing. In 2021, AHN Nursing began a concerted effort to help discharge more patients by 11 a.m., through a program dubbed Home for Lunch.

With this early discharge, nurses must prepare more efficiently. In addition:

- We free up beds for emergency and surgery patients.
- Patients can fill prescriptions on the way home.
- Patients can connect with caregivers that same day.
- The transition from hospital to home may be safer in daylight.

Pilot programs took place at all AHN hospitals, each adapting to its own needs and staffing strengths. Some notable improvement was made across the board in discharging patients earlier in the day, with a 3% increase in patients discharged before 3 p.m. between 2020 and 2021. There's plenty more work to be done in the months and years ahead, but we're encouraged by the progress.

Inventive training could prevent falls

Falls are no fun. But through a special event, hosted by the Star Center at AHN West Penn Hospital, fall prevention became a fun activity.

The Star Center staff created an "escape room" scenario to help nurses identify fall risks based on actual hospital situations. Participants had to follow a trail of critical clues to reach the exit, but, along the way, they picked up valuable instruction about how to minimize falls among patients and co-workers.

The escape room concept has been used to reduce nurse errors, and now fall prevention is being considered as part of the orientation program for new nurses.

Improving patient safety

Ongoing efforts to measure nurse-sensitive indicators continued in 2021, and we again performed at a high level, despite significant challenges.

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 2019 Q3 through 2021 Q2 showed a high percentage of units that outperformed the NDNQI benchmark, as follows:

93% outperform for CAUTI93% outperform for CLABSI

85% outperform for falls

91% outperform for HAPI

NDNQI NURSE-SENSITIVE INDICATOR PERFORMANCES, 2019 Q3 - 2021 Q2

CATHETER-ASSOCIATED URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (CAUTI)

Percent of Units Outperforming the NDNQI Benchmark

	NDNQI Benchmark
AGH	80%
AVH	100%
СН	100%
FH	92%
JH	100%
SVH	100%
WPH	90%
AHN Nursing Overall	93%
· ·	

FALLS WITH INJURY

AGH 93%

AVH 57%

CH 67%

FH 77%

JH 100%

WPH 85%

AHN Nursing Overall 85%

SVH

CENTRAL LINE-ASSOCIATED BLOODSTREAM INFECTIONS (CLABSI)

Percent of Units Outperforming the NDNQI Benchmark

	NDNQI Benchmark
AGH	100%
AVH	100%
СН	100%
FH	100%
JH	100%
SVH	100%
WPH	50%
AHN Nursing Overall	93%

HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED PRESSURE INJURIES, STAGE 2 AND ABOVE (HAPI)

Percent of Units Outperforming the NDNQI Benchmark

88%

80%
100%
100%
73%
100%
100%
100%
91%

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