

Emplify Health by Gundersen

THE NURSING IMPACT

December 2024

Dear Nursing Professionals,

As your nursing professional governance chairs, we are continually inspired by the remarkable impact that nurses have when engaged in healthcare decision-making.

It was both an honor and a privilege to read the heartfelt stories of innovative and compassionate care that unfolds within our organization. We hope these narratives instill a sense of pride in our nursing profession and motivate you to actively participate in nursing professional governance in the future.

Moreover, we trust that these stories will refresh and inspire you in your daily work, serving as a powerful reminder of the profound difference you make in the lives of our patients. We encourage you to share your love and passion for nursing throughout our healthcare system, and to continue “emplifying” the voice of every nurse. Together, let us elevate the standards of care and foster a culture of excellence in nursing.

Warm regards,
Cathy and Jordan
Nursing Professional Governance Chairs



Cathy Morris, RN
Outpatient Council
Chairperson



Jordan Benedict, RN
Inpatient Council
Chairperson

Our Nursing Strategic Vision Supports the Emplify Health Strategic Plan



Elevate the Voice of the Nurse in Professional Practice



Become a Destination Workplace for Staff & Students



Be a Leader in Workforce Innovations



Lead Care Delivery with Top of Licensure Practice to Drive Optimal Outcomes





Transforming Care: The Medical Specialty Unit's Commitment to Individualized Support

The Medical Specialty Unit has made significant changes this year to enhance patient care, focusing on individualized support and improved processes. The team has prioritized more patient care conferences and improved discharge planning, while nurses have diligently worked on refining care planning through improved shift to shift communication and comprehensive individualized care plans. Additionally, the unit welcomed Katie Germain, Geriatric Nurse Practitioner, to provide consistent and knowledgeable care for patients with a neurocognitive diagnosis.



Earlier this year, a patient's prolonged hospital stay prevented her from going on a vacation to celebrate her 45th wedding anniversary. In a beautiful display of compassion, the nurses transformed her room into a tropical oasis. On the morning of the anniversary, they dressed the patient in a lovely nightgown, and prepared mocktails for the couple to enjoy together. The patient's husband expressed immense gratitude for the care his wife received. This story highlights the unit's commitment to compassionate care, reinforcing the positive impact of the recent changes on both patients and staff.

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What makes the Medical Specialty Unit special? The care and the love. You girls love so much. It is so special. You always lend an ear and a hand. The care though is really special. I don't think I would be here without you all loving me so much. -Medical Specialty Unit patient

The General Medical Unit is Showered in Sunshine!

In 1985, television station WEAU created the Sunshine Awards as a way for viewers to publicly thank others for acts of kindness and recognize those who bring a little sunshine into someone's day. In March 2024, Gundersen patient Mick Hawley nominated the General Medical Unit for the award. Mick told WEAU, “I was in the hospital for fifteen days at Gundersen in La Crosse... The staff, from the doctors all the way down to the housekeepers, did not go unnoticed. God bless each and every one of you.”



What's the General Medical Unit's secret to that golden glow?

The General Medical Unit partnered with the Patient Experience Department to identify areas of opportunity. The unit decided to begin asking patients open-ended questions to provide a safe opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. With this renewed focus, the nursing staff learned about human connection and the impact of open-ended questions in their professional development meetings. By asking the right questions and listening to learn, the Gen Med team improved their patient experience scores by 18%.



Care Coordinator Supports Patient Every Step of the Way

A patient presented to the hospital following a procedure, expecting a routine 24 hour stay. However, his illness was serious and the next year of his and his family's life consisted of numerous trips to Gundersen for surgeries & appointments to regain his independence. Emily Cerny, RN was assigned as his Care Coordinator. She assisted this family in navigating through the complex world of health care. She assured them that he was well taken care of, answering numerous questions about his care. She held their hands during some of the scariest moments they had ever encountered in their life.

A letter expressing his gratitude towards Emily stated "We don't know how we will ever be able to thank you for all you have done for us. When they assigned you to this case, they assigned us with an angel. You have gone above and beyond to see that his care and needs were met whenever we asked. We feel sad that our time with you is coming to an end." Their incredibly powerful letter demonstrated how appreciative they were to have someone who so strongly advocated for him so intently with care and attention to detail.

It's hard to describe the emotions I felt walking alongside this patient for over a year. He made it through some dark, painful days. As a nurse, I wanted to make it all better for him... and quickly. The patient persevered. My heart could explode seeing where he is today. He is healing, strong, determined and beyond grateful to have a normal life again. It was an absolute honor and privilege to walk alongside him during his journey. -Emily Cerny, RN

Patient and Family View the ICU Team as Angels After a Life Altering Event

20-year-old college student Ethan was healthy, excelling in school and loved by family and friends. It was a shocking discovery when friends found him unconscious at his home in February 2024. He was admitted to Gundersen's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) after imaging revealed he had an arteriovenous malformation (AVM), an abnormal and rare tangle of blood vessels that causes problems with the connections between arteries and veins. During an extensive stay in the ICU, he received support and rehabilitation from several interdisciplinary teams that continually delivered Emplify Health's value of excellence.

Ethan eventually transferred out of the ICU and was discharged to an outside rehabilitation center in early March. But Ethan and his family remain thankful for the care received by Gundersen nurses. Jo Koyle, a nurse new to the ICU and Gundersen, formed a strong bond with Ethan and his family through her compassionate and caring nature.

Ethan's story is a shining example of how exceptional patient care can have a very real and lasting effect on not only the patient's life, but also their circle of loved ones. Ethan's parents later sent cards to the nurses and wrote a tribute on social media:



The amazing angels that care every hour of every day for him are truly our heroes. We cannot say enough great thanks to all of the staff at Gundersen. As for Ethan's nurses at Gundersen, there are none better. Every one of them gave our son, our precious child, so much love and care. We can never thank them enough. -Ethan's family



Preadmissions and Preop Team Up to Reach Surgery Patients



In the summer of 2023, the Preadmissions department set a goal to reach all patients scheduled for surgery at Gundersen's La Crosse and Winona locations. The team decided on this goal after understanding nurses in the Pre-Op departments were spending a significant amount of time going over preop instructions on the phone with patients the day before surgery, which took them away from providing specialized care to the patients physically in their department before and after surgery. Under the new system, Preadmissions nurses took on the responsibility of identifying any patient with surgery scheduled the next day who had not yet had a Pre-Anesthesia Testing and Teaching (PATT) appointment.

Nurses put on their problem-solving hats to address the challenges that came with implementing a new process. They designed a new system that proved beneficial not only as a significant time saver but also improved perioperative flow and ensured patients were well prepared for procedure. On a broader scale, the organization experienced a reduction in same-day surgery cancellations, saving valuable operating room time and resources. By streamlining the preadmissions process, Gundersen aims to ensure that patients are well-prepared for their surgeries, leading to improved outcomes, increased patient satisfaction, and optimized utilization of resources.

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It's quite an accomplishment that we are now reaching 99% of patients going through the OR! It's rewarding to be able to educate patients before surgery. -Kate Carter, RN and Paige McKinnon, RN

A Clear Vision for Patient Flow: Outpatient Surgery Changes Workflow to Streamline Cataract Surgery Process

If you've never been to the La Crosse Outpatient Surgery Center (OSC) on eye surgery day, it is hard to believe the volume of patients they can admit and discharge efficiently, safely and with great patient experience. Recently, Outpatient Surgery nurses identified an area of congestion when providing patient care within their department. With up to 40 patients receiving life-changing cataract surgery each day, each minute of operating room time is valuable.

While looking for workflow optimizations, staff identified a treatment room that was being used for storage. OSC nurses collaborated with department leadership and support staff to work through multiple plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles and trialed the treatment room as a recovery and discharge room for Ophthalmology patients. The trial was a success and reduced patient time in OSC by six minutes. The workflow changes have allowed for a smooth and efficient patient discharge process that frees up Pre-Op rooms previously used for discharge. This change has also improved on-time admissions for the patient population.



Patients have complimented the changes and have said, "OSC staff are kind and provide exceptional care".



Deb Kelly, RN: A Lifelong Journey of Compassion at Palmer Lutheran Hospital

If you've ever met Deb Kelly, RN, you will not be surprised to know she's been brightening patients and nurses' days in the hospital since the day she was born. Born at Palmer in the 1950s, the nursing staff paraded her up and down the halls to show off her full head of hair to the other patients in the hospital. Deb has dedicated her life to nursing at Palmer Lutheran Hospital, where she has practiced nursing since 1979. After completing her diploma in nursing, she returned to West Union in 1979 to work the nightshift at Palmer Lutheran.

Over the years, Deb transitioned through various roles, including evening shift supervisor and eventually becoming the Emergency Room Manager in 2010—a dream she had since her early days at the hospital. In 2021, she expanded her responsibilities to include the inpatient medical/surgical unit and labor & delivery.



Deb has witnessed significant changes in healthcare, from the introduction of gloves to the emphasis on patient education and shorter hospital stays. During the time where it was more common to not have a clinician in house, she recalls a precipitous delivery where the baby arrived before the clinician was in house, as well as needing to defibrillate patients before a clinician arrived. Her experiences have shaped her belief that nursing is both an art and a science, emphasizing the importance of understanding patients' backgrounds and social determinants of health.

This fall, Deb retired from her role as manager and is working PRN in the hospital about once a week as needs arise. In her retirement, Deb plans to volunteer in hospice care, continuing her commitment to helping others. She reflects on her career with pride, cherishing the relationships she built and the legacy of mentorship she hopes to leave behind. Deb's journey at Palmer Lutheran Hospital exemplifies a lifelong dedication to compassionate care and community service.



Nursing is not just a task, it's an art and a science. You have to have that love of people and want to get to know them- what's going to help them get better. It's those things that make a difference. - Deb Kelly, RN



Caring for the Crowd: Gundersen Tri-County Hospital's Role at Ashley for the Arts



One of the largest charity events in Wisconsin, Ashley for the Arts has been held in Arcadia for the last 15 years and continues to grow larger each year that passes. It began as a small-town festival to raise money for the local school district clubs and now reaches over 70,000 people in attendance for the 3-day music, art, and cultural festival.

Even though it's over 15 miles away, Gundersen's Tri-County Memorial Hospital is the closest hospital to the festival. Naturally, with their commitment to relentlessly caring, the Tri-County team has taken on ensuring appropriate medical care is available at the festival.

Bri Rotering, RN and supervisor of Tri-County's emergency department and ambulance service, has put countless hours into making everything run as smooth as possible, including preparing everyone for unforeseeable situations that may happen.

The onsite medical tent is staffed with Tri-County nurses, and there are up to five rigs available through the local ambulance services to transport patients to the Tri-County Emergency Department. Nurses at the medical tent are prepared to respond to everything from bug bites to heat exhaustion. Due to the record attendees anticipated, Emergency Department clinicians, CNAs and extra nurses were available to intervene for whatever medical needs arose. While the nursing staff worked in the tent, EMS staff circulated among the grounds and partnered with local law enforcement from many area municipalities to ensure a safe festival for all.

Calmar Clinic Spreads Holiday Cheer

Every year, the Calmar Clinic eagerly anticipates the annual "Christmas in Calmar" event that brings many rural communities together to celebrate the holiday season. The clinic collaborates to develop new and exciting themes each year. From engaging games like "I Spy" and ball games to delightful photo booths, they ensure there's something for everyone to enjoy. To add to the holiday cheer, the clinic serves hot cinnamon apple cider and popcorn with M&Ms, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

The event provides an opportunity for community members to interact with the team, ask questions about the clinic, and learn about the wide range of services offered. It's a perfect opportunity to promote the clinic and inspire community members to take charge of their health. By actively participating in this event, the clinic demonstrates their support for the community inside and outside of the clinic. They take pride in being an integral part of the community and make an effort to participate in various events throughout the year.





Empowering Recovery: Tomah Patients Gain Access to Suboxone Treatment Close to Home

Accessing suboxone treatment can be a challenge for patients in the Tomah area, as it requires daily trips to a suboxone clinic, with La Crosse being the closest option for Gundersen's patients in Tomah. This vital medication helps curb cravings for opioids through daily administration, ensuring patients receive the support they need for their continued success in sobriety. For any patient, especially those who are trying to rebuild their life while they recover from opioid use disorder, a daily drive to La Crosse is a significant barrier to successful treatment. Recognizing this barrier, a dedicated team of clinicians and nurses formed a taskforce to establish suboxone treatment at Gundersen's Tomah clinic. Tomah patients are grateful to have this essential treatment available alongside their primary care provider (PCP), and the team is fortunate to have Dr. Katherine Cleven on-site to assist with ongoing behavioral health support.



I have been honored to be a part of implementing this program for our local patients. Providing quality and needed healthcare in rural areas has always been a focus in my nursing career. I enjoy the trusting nurse/patient relationship I have developed with these patients for a healthcare issue that too many times comes with a stigma. - Tracy Verkler-Lehner, RN



Empowering Patients Through a Simple Phone Call: Hospice Nurses Ensure Patients are *Tucked In* for the Weekend



Over the past year, Hospice has introduced a valuable initiative of making "Tuck In calls"- weekly phone calls to patients to ensure that they have everything they need to navigate the upcoming weekend smoothly. By confirming medication availability, supplies, and support, these proactive calls address any concerns and provide reassurance to patients and their families.

Many times, nurses need to arrange delivery of medication and supplies over the weekend which can be challenging to get patients what they need. Ensuring a smooth transition into the weekend is a priority that helps promote the patient's comfort and well-being.

The added layer of protection offered by these calls brings peace of mind, ensuring uninterrupted care over the weekend. Sometimes, all it takes is a listening ear to provide comfort and support to patients and their loved ones.



Family Medicine La Crosse Refines their Emergency Situation Protocols

After a patient situation in the La Crosse Family Medicine Clinic requiring the Clinic Response Team (CRT), nurses in this department identified a need to improve their emergency preparedness. All those involved in the emergency event gathered the following day to discuss what had gone well and potential areas or opportunities for improvement. Through this debrief, the team determined a huddle should occur after a patient emergency. During these nurse-led discussions, successes, challenges, and how to mitigate risks for future situations are communicated.

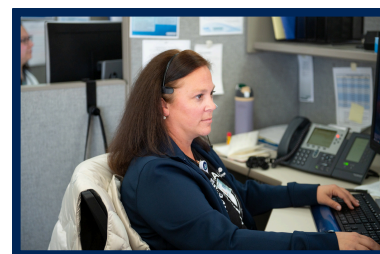
As a result of this particular huddle, every patient room and every staff area has a laminated red sign indicating what to do in an emergency – including pushing the emergency button, calling 911, and getting the AED and crash cart. The sign is a quick resource to get started with the right interventions and be prepared for the CRT when they arrive.



These debriefs improve processes and procedures and allow staff to process emotions in a safe space. Not only has this increased patient safety, but also has helped decrease staff burnout and increase staff morale.

One Call, That's All: Telephone Nurse Advisors Begin Scheduling Patients for Follow Up Appointments During Phone Call

Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, Telephone Nurse Advisors are available by phone to provide evidence based advice for the community, whether that's care at home, or advice on how soon, and where to be seen. Resources and health education are provided to patients while also providing after hours support for care teams across the Gundersen region.



Beginning last spring, The Telephone Nurse Advisors launched the process of scheduling patient appointments after completing triage. This means that patients calling for guidance only need to make this one phone call and when they hang up the phone, if needed, they will have their clinician appointment made. This was an entirely new skill set for most of the nurses as most had never done scheduling before. This new process has increased access for patients to be seen by an appropriate clinician within an appropriate period of time. Assisting with scheduling these patient appointments helps patients avoid unnecessary Urgent Care visits and allows clinic appointments to be scheduled that may have otherwise gone unfilled.

“One evening, I cared for a gentleman in his 80's whose concern needed to be addressed within 24 hours. Because of the new scheduling process, I was able to set him up with an appointment at his home clinic in Whitehall the following day. It's a great service to offer the public! -Pam Fisher, RN



Obstetric Nurses Make the Call: Supporting Patients in the Fourth Trimester

As of March 1, 2024, the Outpatient OB departments developed a process to support their obstetrical patients in their fourth trimester, also known as the postpartum phase. A new two-week post-delivery phone call was initiated for all patients who delivered at our La Crosse Hospital. The nurses worked with their leaders, PDN, and Nursing Informatics to create a standardized smart phrase to support the conversations, being sensitive to the possibility that not every patient experiences a “normal” postpartum phase. The conversation includes questions that attend to assessing both physical and emotional experiences that occur after birth and identification of support that may be needed.

This continuum of care is vital to these patients and their families, not only for their medical well-being, but their social and psychosocial well-being. Our nurses saw a need and used their voices to build on our history of exceptional care to enhance the connection and service provided in the postpartum phase.



I have had babies at Gundersen Health System in the past, but this is the first time a nurse has called for postpartum follow-up, I cannot thank you enough, this service is awesome! -OB/Gyn clinic patient



The OBGYN La Crosse and Onalaska Clinics have contacted approximately 1500 postpartum patients in the past six months. This work has also expanded to the primary care clinics that care for OB patients, where nurses are completing the phone call process.

As of August, the Inpatient and Outpatient OB nurses collaborated to enhance this two-week follow up. The outpatient OB nurses also utilize the two-week phone call to follow up with patients that have experienced fetal loss. The supportive conversation is tailored to ensure this specific patient population's health and well-being is addressed appropriately. Together we are building a community of support for a very special patient population.



I had a postpartum call with a patient with a very complicated labor/delivery that needed care after. I talked with the clinician and got the patient set up with her postpartum visit and the patient was very thankful, all from one phone call. -Patti Anderson, RN



Elevating Nursing Scope of Practice and Patient Care: The Impact of Nurse-Led Support in Rheumatology



The Rheumatology department recently recognized a growing need for a new workflow to best answer questions from other departments. This new workflow empowers nurses to be the front-line contact for departments calling with questions on medications or symptoms. During clinic business hours, a designated registered nurse is on-call for non-urgent questions from other departments regarding established Rheumatology patients and their autoimmune conditions. The nurse gathers essential patient information and relays it to the clinician on-call.

Not only has this new on-call process significantly improved access to Rheumatology clinicians, but it's also providing the nurses an opportunity to increase their scope of practice.



Raising the Bar-code: Renal Dialysis Nurses Achieve Scanning Compliance Goals

Barcode Medication Administration Scanning (BCMA) is one of the many ways nurses keep patients safe from medical errors. It's a simple step that reduces the risk of a patient getting the wrong medication or wrong dose of a medication. This year, Renal Dialysis worked to improve their scanning metric. Through reminder emails and discussion at monthly meetings, the team kept their goal of improved scanning compliance top of mind. Additionally, nurses changed their workflow to make sure they reviewed the Medication Administration Record (MAR) for a point in time evaluation of whether scanning was completed prior to the end of treatment. The team was able to increase their scanning compliance to over 95% which is the organization's goal.



Like any success in nursing, this was a team effort, with nurses working together and generating solutions to reach a common goal. It was not easy to get where we are right now. This shows that we can meet our goals and not to take the foot off the gas. -Tina Clemmer, RN



Empowered Collaboration: Prairie du Chien Nurses Innovate During a Leadership Transition



Leadership changes in a department can often provide an opportunity for nurses to creatively problem solve. When Crystal Goltz, Prairie du Chien (PDC) clinical manager took on a new role within the organization, the PDC nurses collaborated to come up with a strategy to meet the management needs of the department as well as daily staffing needs.



Because of their strong collaboration, clinic workflows continued smoothly, and staff were grateful to be able to cover within to continue to provide the patients with the care, compassion, and expertise that they have grown to expect and know. To meet the needs, current staff modified their days off, worked extra, or jumped in from other departments. The nurses were ready and willing to adjust their personal schedules to help accommodate coverage. This was a team effort with all PDC nurses contributing to the successful outcome. The strong collaboration allowed the team within PDC to manage without utilization of float pool or their Ambulatory Vacancy group.

Family Medicine Onalaska Enhances Teamwork

In March 2024, staff from Onalaska Family Medicine partnered with Professional Development Nurses to develop the In-Basket Collaborative to identify and develop new processes to decrease In-Basket burden for both clinicians and nurses. Another important outcome for this work was to improve the patient experience by ensuring timely correspondence between the patient and clinician.

These nurses have created a workflow to mitigate the overwhelming amount of “MyChart Notifications” occupying the clinician’s In-Baskets such as unread messages by patients. The changes they implemented have leveraged the expertise of the nurse and decreased the number of telephone encounters between clinicians and nurses. In addition, the team created protocols for Medical Assistants to streamline mammogram results for clinician review. The group is excited to continue exploring new methods to decrease In-Basket load and work more collaboratively as a team.



Exciting changes are coming up where we will have the ability to work proactively with our clinicians and decrease their workload by accessing their in-basket, utilizing these workflows, and address specific results and notifications on the clinician’s behalf. - Jen Heyroth, RN



Ambulatory Nursing Float Pool – A Great Place to Work

This May, the ambulatory float pool was nominated by their colleagues and won the “Best Department” award for the second year in a row!

The float pool is made up of over 45 nurses and MAs. They support each other every day, whether they just joined the float pool or have been in Gundersen’s ambulatory float pool their entire career. The nursing team may not work side by side with each other every day, but they stay connected with one another through bi-weekly huddles, lunch breaks in the float pool suite, a Microsoft Teams chat group, monthly celebration lunches, and more. They utilize each other as resources throughout the organization, as do staff from many other departments.

The float pool serves over 50 ambulatory departments within Gundersen by providing staffing coverage during short staffing, crisis situations, sick calls, FMLA and department vacations.



Clinic Float Pool - La Crosse



Clinic Float Pool - Onalaska

How do they do it? Staff learn a minimum set number of departments based on their FTE, while many RNs & MAs surpass this based on their experience and longevity in the float pool. In fact, in the first six months of 2024, float pool covered over 2,200 needs.

On top of what they do within the departments, they also partner with Patient Experience in answering the Safe Patient Transport pager. The department helps assist patients on arrival and/or departure while they are at the organization and in need of transportation assistance. Thank you Float Pool for supporting organizational needs!



Gundersen Expands Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit to Address Critical Need

Recently, Inpatient Behavioral Health (IBH) has opened four new permanent beds in its High Acuity Adult unit (“Unit C”). Increasing the availability of high-acuity psychiatric beds, this allows the hospital to create more space in the emergency department for medical patients, admit more psychiatric patients close to home at Gundersen, rather than traveling at least 90 minutes away, and improve patient outcomes. By opening just four new beds, the unit now has the capacity to serve an additional 200 patients annually.



Nurses in IBH are trained to manage a wide spectrum of types and severity in mental health symptoms while holistically supporting the patients struggling with them. The patients we see on our High Acuity unit often struggle with delusions, poor impulse control, dysregulation, intrusiveness, anger, confusion, and/or reckless behavior. Our bedside nurses know how to spot the signs of escalation in a patient, communicate and advocate effectively within the treatment team, communicate effectively with the patient, manage unit milieu (a uniquely important part of our work), and manage crisis situations calmly and efficiently.

Over the years, our nurses have noticed an increased need for high acuity patient rooms and have advocated for more space to care for these patients. Our nurses are on the ground level of taking care of these patients but are also extremely involved in advocating for what we need to provide safe, trauma-informed, empathetic, quality care for every patient who relies on us during their toughest times. We are so proud of increasing our ability to serve this patient population and of our frontline nurses for leading the way in adjusting workflows and practice to provide care efficiently and safely in this expanded space.

Dermatology RN Provides Photodynamic Therapy

Gundersen Dermatology has provided photodynamic therapy to its patients for years. This targeted therapy helps prevent the pre-cancerous skin cells from turning into cancer using blue light. New in the last two years is Sydney Severson, RN performing the treatments. A Dermatologist reviews the skin and determines what areas would benefit from this light therapy and for how long. Sydney takes it from there, applying the cream to necessary areas and setting up the photodynamic therapy (PDT). Patients sit under the blue light for the prescribed length of time. If the nurse sees any skin areas of concern during a treatment, she will bring in a Dermatologist for viewing.



With much of our work over the phone or within Epic, I enjoy providing these treatments because it allows me time to work with patients in person. -Sydney Severson, RN



The Surgical & Digestive Unit Receives Praise for Going the Extra Mile

Patients deserve holistic, compassionate, and empathetic nurses who not only complete their “to dos” for a patient, but sit down with the patient, have a conversation, develop that connection, and advocate for them. Being in a hospital is lonely for many patients. When caregivers can take a few extra moments out of their day to spend with a patient, it truly impacts their perspective on their hospital stay and recovery. Some of these examples can be from the smallest task of listening to a patient’s story, washing and combing their hair, bringing them a magazine or word search, or taking their patient outside.



The Surgical & Digestive Team has received much praise and recognition for their outstanding level of care. The department has been actively focusing on developing patient connections and impacting patients' hospital stays and recovery both physically and mentally. This recognition comes from patients, families, and clinicians for their compassion, empathy, communication skills, and the connections formed to partner with patients in their recovery. Pictured is Jessica Storandt, RN in an apron a patient made for her as a token of gratitude for her exceptional care.

“I am truly lost for words as I try to express the care, love and concern as you also tried to fulfill giving me outstanding and heartfelt care. Please understand you are excellent at your “work” skills and training of nursing, but it goes far about that calling. I felt your special love & great kindness. – Surgical & Digestive Care Unit patient

Nursing Thought Leader Tim Porter O'Grady comes to Gundersen for Inspiring Insights

In September, over 300 nurses from almost 100 departments attended presentations from renowned nursing professional, researcher, and author Dr. Tim Porter-O'Grady. Nurses left feeling inspired and reinvigorated for the profession of nursing. Key take-aways included nurses embracing ownership and professionalism in practice, leading and making decision to shape patient care delivery, and taking an active role to engage in professional development and advocacy opportunities. This professional development experience was made possible by the generous donors to the Gundersen Medical Foundation who understand that funding professional development opportunities for our nurses is an integral part of achieving Gundersen’s mission of creating a future of healthy people and thriving communities.

“I really liked how he reframed the mindset nurses should have towards their work as “profession” and not just a job.

“Thank you for investing in our nurses. The speaker was able to help us look beyond what healthcare is now to what it might look like down the road- and that’s exciting for patient care.



“He definitely re-energized my passion for why “I am a nurse”. Nursing is a community that we have the privilege to be a part of.



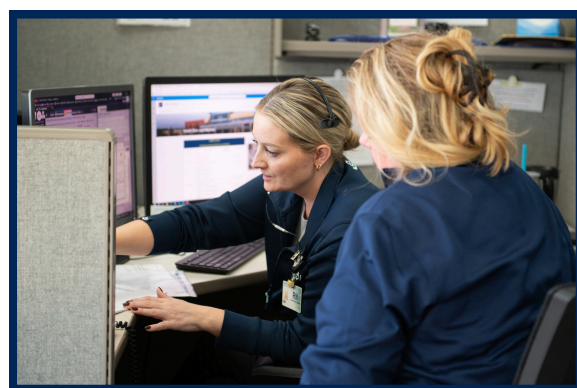
Nursing Professional Governance Councils: Aligning Patient Education

The nursing professional governance councils spent the past 6 months hard at work making our nursing strategic vision come to life. Patient education improvements rose to the top as a priority topic for these nursing representatives to tackle. Each council formed three task force groups and outpatient and inpatient council members collaborated to create a shared understanding of community resources, clear and consistent patient education documentation expectations, and a systematic approach to evaluate current patient education materials. The intent is to make patient education delivery more effective for nurses, and more impactful for the patients and families we serve.



Building the Future of Nursing: Gundersen's New Professional Orientation Pathway Model

Professional Development Nurses (PDNs) at Gundersen are constantly evaluating the way we onboard nurses at Gundersen and seek out innovative ways to meet the needs of our dynamic workforce. This year, PDNs worked to develop a new Professional Orientation Pathway aimed at enhancing the onboarding experience for newly licensed nurses. This model focuses on building essential nursing skills and behaviors while providing meaningful support, ultimately fostering professional growth and increasing job satisfaction among new RNs.



The new Professional Orientation Pathway combines a tiered skills approach, building on what's been experienced, with elements from competency expert Donna Wright's model, focusing on inquiry, accountability, and growth. This new orientation model offers meaningful documentation, encourages new RNs to engage in their professional development, and supports novice preceptors by clearly defining their roles.



Winona Campus Welcomes Students

Nursing students' clinical experiences make a huge impact on new nurse confidence and competence. At Gundersen's Winona Campus, the ambulatory nurses have created a great atmosphere for learning and development for area students.

"I thoroughly enjoy working with our future nurses. I personally find it rewarding to help grow our profession, share nursing knowledge, and hear about what is being taught to new nurses. As an organization, I think it is very valuable to have students so we can showcase the care provided to our patients and in turn hopefully recruit them to work at our organization. -Robyn Hinz, RN"

This collaboration allows students to fulfill their college requirements, while also exposing them to the outpatient world of nursing and learning what it means to be a Gundersen Nurse. A lot of the skills such as telephone triage are new to the students. Experiencing telephone triage helps students strengthen assessment and communication skills that require a different skillset over the phone than in person. Some students witnessed first, second and third trimester teaching as well as nonstress testing (NST) and finding heart tones.

Building Skills and Confidence: The Summer Journey of Nurse Interns

37 Nurse Interns spent their summer working on 21 different departments including inpatient, outpatient, and procedural areas across our organization. By putting their nursing skills to work caring for patients and working side by side with comprehensive care teams, the Nurse Interns were able to build both their skills and confidence in delivering Gundersen's exceptional nursing care. These Interns came from nursing programs across the upper Midwest including Bethel University, Minnesota State College Southeast, Moraine Park Technical College, UW-Eau Claire, UW-Oshkosh, Viterbo University, and Winona State University.



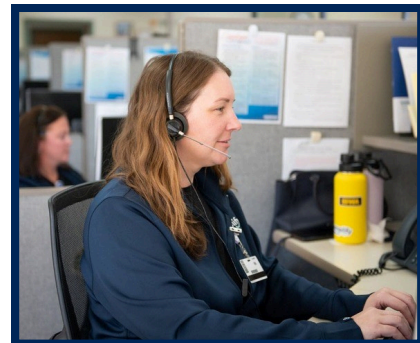
Best of luck to our summer Nurse Interns in their final 1-2 semesters of nursing school. We look forward to working alongside the 32 Nurse Interns who have chosen to continue their career at Gundersen Health System!

"As the leads of the Nurse Intern Program, it is a privilege to be a part of each nurse intern's journey. Our positions allow us the opportunity to see the Nurse Interns as they arrive, most often nervous and unsure, and as they exit the program as strong and confident nurses-to-be. From the time they start to the completion of the program, their dedication, willingness to learn, experiences, growth, and gained knowledge is astonishing."
~Mindy Binder, RN & Ashley King, RN



Collaborating for Excellence: Outpatient Nurses from Bellin and Gundersen Join Forces in Nursing Informatics

This year an enterprise level committee for outpatient nursing informatics was established, comprised of frontline outpatient staff including LPNs, MAs, and RNs. This has been an extremely helpful committee as we navigate outpatient build and workflows with Project Fusion. We are able to get feedback on how items are used within EPIC in both regions to help make informed decisions on our future EPIC.



Some of the first agenda topics were related to aligning our rooming navigator. The team looked at each section we currently have in each region and each region was able to speak to how each section is utilized. They worked on eliminating sections that were no longer utilized and also reviewed the sections that Bellin had that were different than Gundersen's to determine what will be included in the future Emplify Health Epic. It has been so great to be able to collaborate across the regions and these new connections that are being formed will be beneficial as we eventually transition out of Project Fusion and return our focus to standard and improvement work as one organization.

Inpatient Committee for Nursing Informatics: Frontline Voices Drive Epic Transformation

The inpatient committee for nursing informatics (C4NI) has been hard at work over the past 6 months evaluating our current Epic and working through opportunities for change as we look towards merging Epics with Bellin on July 26, 2025. A key part of the success of a large project like this is having the voice of the nurse at the table. We are proud to say that we have nurse representation on over 37 workgroups, with over 42 frontline nurses and 60 nursing leaders. A large portion of the work has occurred in the Nursing and Allied Health Advisory Sub-Council. This sub council meets weekly with nurses representing all areas where inpatient care is delivered at Emplify Health.

I enjoy having an active role in Project Fusion, because change can be difficult when you don't understand it. I have first-hand knowledge and insight regarding why certain processes have to change and I can articulate these changes to help support my colleagues from a bedside perspective. -Erica Cook, RN

At Tim Porter-O'Grady's presentation, he described "setting the table" signifying the importance of the people doing the work being at the table for decision making. Project fusion is a perfect example of this. This nursing sub-council gives bedside nurses the opportunity to be actively involved in EPIC enhancements, decision making, and workflow discussions while collaborating with our new partners at Bellin. The voice of the bedside nurse is at the table while thoroughly reviewing flowsheet rows and ensuring the navigators flow properly. -Erin Heiderscheit, RN



Closing with Gratitude

It is clear through these stories the phenomenal impact our nurses have on patients' journeys, care delivery and work experience. During this season of gratitude, we reflect on the exceptional contributions Gundersen's nursing professionals make each and every day in our community. We recognize your commitment to the profession and are honored to serve alongside you.



Andrea Hauser, DNP, RN, CNL
Chief Nursing Officer,
Gundersen Region




Danielle Rathke, DNP, RN, CNL
Director of Nursing,
Gundersen Region

Nominate a nurse for a 2025 Nurse Excellence Award!

If you know an outstanding nurse who demonstrates excellence in nursing practice, nominate them for a Nurse Excellence Award by clicking [here](#)!

Nominations are accepted through December 31 each year. Nurses will be awarded each year in May.

Thank you to all of the contributors to this edition of The Nursing Impact, including Nurses, Corporate Communications Consultants and Photographers

 Have a story you want to share in an upcoming edition? We want to hear it! Email us at DepartmentofNursingCommunications@gundersenhealth.org

To read more stories about Frontline nurses, check out the [Nursing Spotlight Page](#) on the Nursing website!