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A history of excellence

A message from the Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer

When the World Health Organization designated 2020 as The Year of the Nurse and Midwife, no one expected it would coincide with a global pandemic. However, the convergence of these two events brought into focus just how important nurses are across the world and at MD Anderson.

During a year that tested each of us personally and professionally, MD Anderson’s people remained unified drawing on the collective strength of our core values, the importance of our mission and the excellence of our team. Our 4,400+ nurses stood on the front lines, navigating uncharted territory and working together to discover new ways to provide safe care to patients. Without hesitation, our nurses volunteered to join interdisciplinary teams that provided care for our COVID-19-positive cancer patients. Others worked at testing locations, providing reassurance to patients and colleagues during a time of uncertainty. And when we made the tough decision to restrict visitors, our nurses stepped in to provide the human connection that patients need to help them heal.

Our nurse educators worked around the clock to provide in-depth training on how to care for COVID-19-positive cancer patients while maintaining safety by properly donning and doffing personal protective equipment. Similarly, our nurse researchers helped patients maintain their adherence to clinical trials protocols. Others worked behind the scenes to create innovative tools and processes for ensuring safe operations. The pandemic proved to be an opportunity for our organization to adopt new ways of working, from using iPads to keep inpatients connected to their loved ones to introducing virtual and telehealth visits with the care teams.

As we stood ready for every challenge, our nurses joined together to achieve our fifth consecutive Magnet designation – a truly memorable moment in MD Anderson history and a testament to our perseverance and commitment to providing world-class care. We joined a truly elite class of organizations, as only 20 hospitals nationwide have earned five designations by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet Recognition Program.

We closed out 2020 with the successful design and implementation of our workforce COVID-19 vaccination efforts. There could not have been a better way to demonstrate our appreciation and end the year than being able to offer this protection to our nurses in a safe, convenient environment, thus further protecting our patients.

We are a better organization today because of the obstacles we have overcome and our unwavering commitment to our patients, community and each other. I invite you to enjoy the meaningful stories and extraordinary milestones detailed in this year’s annual report. They not only contribute to our longstanding history of nursing excellence, but also forecast continued collective perseverance, adaptability and growth.

Carol Porter, D.N.P., RN, FAAN
Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Nursing by the numbers

4,400+

total number of nurses

This number includes inpatient nurses, research nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nurses in ambulatory and leadership roles. MD Anderson has more full-time registered nurses and advanced practice providers than most hospitals nationwide, and the most of any hospital in Texas.

*Data based on Magnet reporting definitions. Approximate values for FY20.

Our workforce includes nurses in a variety of roles, including:

- 2,802 clinical nurses
- 517 advanced practice registered nurses
- 96 certified registered nurse anesthetists
- 243 research nurses
- 75 case managers
- 32 nurse educators

- 62% have a specialty certification
- 91% have a bachelor’s degree or higher
- 32% of nurses in leadership positions have a doctoral degree
A year of endless challenges, extraordinary achievements

What we have accomplished in response to — and in spite of — the pandemic has been amazing. Together, we:

• Established COVID-19 screening and testing sites.

• Created the COVID-19 Swab Team to ensure the efficiency of screening, ordering, collecting and transporting patient nasopharyngeal swab testing. (See more on page 12)

• Opened COVID-19 units and formed specialized teams.

• Rolled out the reassignment pool and developed a Healthcare Workforce Dashboard to track daily staffing plans for roles critical to patient care across the institution.

• Provided education on cutting-edge clinical practices for care of COVID-19 patients. Our nursing educators cross-trained nurses to work on COVID-19 units and in the ICU, provided in-person and computer-based education on personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilator management and more.

• Adapted the nurse “spotter” role to care for COVID-19 patients. Spotters safely guide staff members as they don and doff PPE to minimize risk for infection when entering or exiting a patient room.

• Continued leadership rounding with nursing leadership and division heads.
Transitioned Leading from the Frontlines from in-person to virtual. These sessions continued to engage nurses across the institution, reaching more than 1,500 frontline staff.

Cared for more than 488 COVID-19+ unit admissions. 2,454 PUI floor admissions.

Coordinated 3,369 polycom calls between physicians and admitted patients on COVID-19/PUI units to promote personal interaction and communication with the isolated patient, minimize the spread of infection, and conserve the use of PPE when possible.

Participated in 114,000 ambulatory telehealth visits.

Deployed 822 iPads to inpatient floors for patients to use with MyChart Bedside and for virtual family visits. (See more on page 16)

Supported 1,412 clinical trials.

Began employee COVID-19 vaccination clinics. 130+ volunteer nurses received training to administer the vaccines to MD Anderson’s workforce.

Successfully completed virtual survey and achieved our 5th Magnet designation. (See more on page 21)
The power of a team

Nurse Quena Moore’s experience caring for suspected COVID-19-positive patients has helped her appreciate teamwork and collaboration more than ever before. It’s also renewed her sense of commitment to patients, colleagues and the community.

Less than two years into her nursing career, Quena Moore is already trying something new.

In March 2020, most of the Head and Neck Surgery nurse’s team moved to G22 from P11, which transitioned into a designated COVID-19 floor. Moore, however, volunteered to stay and undergo training to care for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases. She says the experience has sparked a renewed sense of commitment to the people she works with.

Brought together by COVID-19

“There was a little bit of fear of the unknown because COVID-19 is something we’ve never dealt with before,” Moore says. “But, from day one, I felt supported and part of a great team.”

Moore appreciates that MD Anderson’s front-line health care workers have the equipment they need to care for patients, including proper personal protective equipment (PPE), education and support from leadership.

“On my first day on the unit, the nurse I reported to stayed after her shift was over to make sure I was confident with all the equipment and processes.”

Moore immediately felt a strong bond with the team who came together from across the institution to work on the COVID-19 units. This includes nurses, physicians, advanced practice providers, patient services coordinators, patient care technicians, housekeepers and others. Together, they learned and adapted to the daily changes of treatment protocols and processes.
“Every day, we have huddles to stay current on any changes because things evolve rapidly,” says Moore. “Whenever we receive a new patient, we all come together to support each other and be resources for each other depending on what our specialty is.”

For example, Moore explains she works with trach tubes every day on her home unit, so she can help nurses who are unfamiliar with them. In turn, she receives the same help from colleagues.

“If I have questions about administering blood products, there’s always someone who can make sure I’m taking all the proper steps,” she says.

Moore says the teamwork also is evident when preparing to go into a patient room. Going in and out of patient rooms is limited as much as possible to limit exposure. A patient care technician or nurse is always available to act as a “spotter,” and ensure the nurse’s PPE is put on properly before entering the room. The technician or nurse then stays outside the room, ready to answer supply requests written on the door window.

“The spotter is like a second hand so we don’t have to go in and out of the patient room,” explains Moore. “If I need a bag of fluids or there’s a medication that needs to be pulled, the spotter is right there to get it and exchange it through the door. Then, when I come out, they sanitize me and all my reusable equipment.”

Moore adds that it takes the entire team to ensure everyone’s safety.

**Getting through together**

Recently, Moore cared for a patient who was at the end-of-life and who wasn’t able to be with their family. Moore stayed with the patient for her entire shift, holding their hand and staying in constant communication with the patient’s husband. It was an experience that’s stuck with Moore, who says she wouldn’t have been able to devote so much time to the patient without the support of her team.

“That patient really touched me and I didn’t want her to feel alone,” says Moore. “It was a difficult time, but we did the best we could to make the patient feel comfortable.”

If I have questions about administering blood products, there’s always someone who can make sure I’m taking all the proper steps.” she says.

Moore adds that she was so grateful to have her team.

“They were wonderful – backing me up and supporting me, so I could help support her.”

She shares that she never imagined being on the frontlines during a pandemic so early in her career, but she’s grateful to have the chance to make an immediate impact on those in need.

“Being a nurse has been an incredibly rewarding experience and I can’t thank the people I work with enough for always being willing teach me, take me under their wing and lend a helping hand,” Moore says. “We will all get through this together.”
Advancing nursing professional practice

Nurses at all levels brought new knowledge, innovation and improvements to advance nursing professional practice and enhance patient care in 2020. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, the pandemic highlighted the incredible adaptability and expertise of our nursing community, as care teams rapidly adjusted to change and discovered new ways to deliver care safely, efficiently and effectively. The following are just a few of the ways our nurses provided cutting-edge, compassionate care to patients and families from around the world.

Discovering the benefits of virtual health coaching

The push toward telehealth and improved at-home monitoring has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our nurses are discovering new ways to support cancer patients and improve patient reported outcomes through the use of electronic health (eHealth) coaching programs.

The Department of Nursing initiated several randomized clinical trials engaging patients with breast cancer, prostate cancer, and leukemia in an eHealth coaching program utilizing evidence-based support and education. Lori Williams, Ph.D., RN, associate professor, Department of Symptom Research, with a joint appointment in the Department of Nursing, is leading the trials with breast and prostate cancer patients.

Patients are contacted once weekly by a health coach by text message, phone call, email, or a mobile application, for three months. Patients also complete 30-minute surveys at baseline and every 30 days for three months. The studies measure the effects of the health coaching on patient-reported outcomes including quality of life, symptom distress and satisfaction with care.

The overall goal of this research is to evaluate new and novel mechanisms to support and coordinate care for patients receiving cancer treatment.

“This type of support for patients with cancer is important, especially as care is moving to a telehealth environment during the pandemic and other forms of support, such as support groups, may not be available,” says Williams. “One patient sent us a message at his completion of the study participation to let us know that the discussions with the health coach were what he had hoped for when he joined a cancer support group. The patient found that the one-on-one format with a health coach worked better for him than a support group.”
Epic-Alaris Interoperability: Integration brings improvements

In October, our Texas Medical Center campus successfully integrated Alaris infusion pumps with Epic, our electronic health record (EHR) system – taking medication delivery and patient safety to a new level.

The ability to link programmable IV infusion pumps directly to patient medical records ensures the right patient receives the right medication, at the right rate, at the right time.

The collaborative effort between Nursing, Information Services and Pharmacy took several months and thousands of hours of manpower to plan and successfully implement. The change gives nurses the ability to send medication infusion orders from Epic to the Alaris pump at the start of an infusion. This results in a continuous data flow from the pump back into Epic throughout the infusion. Nurses can then validate data that needs to be documented in the patient’s record.

“Pump integration improves medication safety by ensuring the use of the Alaris pump Guardrails library and reducing the risk of manual pump programming errors,” says Reji Jacob, associate director, Nursing Informatics. “It improves nursing workflow by eliminating 11 programming steps for the nurse when using the Alaris pump. In addition, it improves documentation accuracy by automatically capturing all the activity from the pump, including start and stop times, rate changes and the actual volume infused.”

Alaris Guardrails usage has improved from 68% prior to interoperability to greater than 87%. The number of Guardrails alerts per month has also decreased by more than 50% since pump integration.

MD Anderson’s Houston-area locations also went live with pump integration in March 2021.

Nursing Professional Practice Model

MD Anderson’s Nursing Professional Practice Model (PPM) represents how key elements of professional nursing practice at MD Anderson connect to each other. Developed by frontline nurses, our PPM is based on the Quality Caring model, developed by Joanne Duffy, Ph.D., RN, FAAN. The PPM is reviewed annually by our Nursing Practice Congress and has been updated to include MD Anderson’s two new institutional core values, Safety and Stewardship.
Rolling out rapid testing

Gone are the days of waiting over 24 hours to get COVID-19 test results. Thanks to a collaborative effort between the COVID-19 Swab Team, Microbiology Laboratory and the OneConnect team, BioFire rapid testing was expanded to our Acute Cancer Care Center and inpatient units. Test results are available within two hours and patients experience a shorter length of stay on the COVID-19 Persons Under Investigation (PUI) unit.

The Swab Team, which includes seven nurses and five patient care technicians, manage all patient COVID-19 testing in the Acute Cancer Care Center and inpatient units. As the only team that has access to order rapid testing, they worked closely with the Microbiology Laboratory during the transition in October 2020. Nurses ensured proper supplies like vials for specimen collection were available and ordering functions were accurate within the electronic health record (EHR) system.

Nursing’s Uniqua Smith, Ph.D., associate director, Innovation and Performance Improvement, helped develop and lead the Swab Team, which collected more than 14,000 specimens for COVID-19 testing in 2020. She says the level of collaboration over the last year between Nursing and Microbiology has been phenomenal.

“You have two groups of professionals who do not normally work so closely with one another, come together during a global pandemic and address one of the most urgent needs of the institution – efficient and accurate COVID-19 testing,” says Smith. “Both teams have far exceeded their expectations and continue to improve testing capabilities to meet the needs of our patients and the organization.”

Since rapid testing has been implemented and the turnaround time for test results has decreased, it has allowed clinical operations to reduce the amount of time patients are kept on the PUI unit. Because of this, hospital leadership has been able to rearrange the floor structure and close empty PUI beds to provide space for other services, while still maintaining an adequate amount of COVID-19 dedicated beds.
Difficult but necessary conversations address goals of care

While engaging patients in advance care planning can be a sensitive subject, a group of clinical leaders is working to make these discussions part of every patient’s routine care. Physicians and APRNs are leading Goals of Care conversations, which are helping increase patients’ knowledge about their illness and awareness about future care decisions that need to be made.

“It’s a tough conversation to have, but the earlier you can engage the patient in advance care planning, the better,” says Carla Patel, APRN and inpatient medical director, Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. “Having a Goals of Care discussion requires being present and actively listening to the patient to elicit what is important in their life, what they are afraid of, what they hope for, and what their goals are with treatment. Understanding patient goals and priorities empowers and equips us to provide better care.”

The Goals of Care initiative began as an Operational Priority and has been a collaborative effort, with a strong partnership between physicians and nurses. MD Anderson’s interdisciplinary team of clinical leaders across the institution, including executive leadership, division and department chairs, Supportive Care, Case Management and Social Work, are continually working to provide care teams with the resources they need to have conversations with patients about what to expect during their cancer experience, and to document those decisions in a way that other members of the care team can easily access and act upon.

Some of the clinical benefits of these conversations include:

- Better end-of-life care outcomes
- Improved Quality of Life measures to decrease depression and anxiety
- Improved patient-family communication and family bereavement

Goals of Care conversations with patients are monitored daily via unit census, 24-hour admit reports and Merit List reports. If a need for a Goals of Care conversation is identified, inpatient medical directors work directly with the primary providers to coordinate any requested resources. Case Management has also partnered with the Goals of Care team to identify patients at risk for decompensating and coordinate care team meetings.
**Integrating palliative care in cardio-oncology**

Among the most dreaded complications of cancer therapy is heart failure, which can occur during cancer treatment or even arise several years into survivorship. But which patients with a dual diagnosis of cancer and heart failure could benefit from a palliative care referral? Anecita Fadol, Ph.D., FAAN, is conducting research in the evolving field of cardio-oncology to help answer that question.

Improved access to hospice and palliative care for patients with cancer and advanced heart failure, across the cancer care continuum, is recommended by leading professional societies in cardiology and oncology. However, despite guidelines recommending the inclusion of palliative care, there is insufficient data offering guidance for patients with a dual diagnosis of cancer and heart failure.

Fadol conducted a systematic literature review which provided evidence-based data to inform the development of criteria for palliative care referrals for patients with cancer and concurrent heart failure. Her findings provided baseline information for the next step in the research process to develop and validate clinically useful criteria for palliative care referral. These criteria will allow clinicians to prospectively identify cancer patients with a concurrent diagnosis of heart failure who may most benefit from a palliative care referral.

“Integrating palliative care in cardio-oncology, particularly in the management of heart failure in patients with cancer, as early as at diagnosis, will enable patients, family members, and health care professionals to make informed decisions about various treatments and end-of-life care,” says Fadol, associate professor in the Nursing department with a joint appointment in the Cardiology department. “It also will provide an opportunity for patients to participate in the decisions about when and where they will spend their final days.”

**Emphasizing safety**

When rotations for MD Anderson’s Post Graduate Fellowship in Oncology Nursing were put on hold due to the pandemic, it didn’t stop our fellows from learning new things and keeping our care teams safe. Some of our APRN fellows volunteered to assist with the many projects the COVID-19 Task Force had underway.

Jessica Thomas, an APRN fellow, was in the Breast Medical Oncology rotation when MD Anderson began making significant changes on campus, and she calls helping out during this time a no-brainer.

“My natural instinct as a nurse is to jump into action when needed,” she says.

She served in a variety of capacities, including assisting the simulation team to modify Code Blue algorithms for COVID-19-positive patients, aiming to protect our care teams while providing safe care. Their team worked daily to ensure the necessary staff were educated and able to properly run through a Mock Code simulation.

Research led by Anecita Fadol, Ph.D., is helping to improve health care delivery for cancer patients with cardiovascular problems.
Chasity Yajima, APRN, looked for ways to help out and continue learning when her fellowship was put on hold.

fellow, both joined our nursing education team to help provide training for proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and to be spotters for their colleagues. The quick pace of everything meant that training was happening nearly around the clock to ensure everyone who needed to be educated could be in a short amount of time.

“My fellowship was put on hold, but not my ability to learn,” says Yajima. “As I looked for areas where I could be of help, I wanted to try new things and continue my learning. The fellowship teaches you that traits like flexibility and adaptability are essential to being successful, and I feel I was better prepared for the ever-changing environment this pandemic has brought us because of it.”

Having completed their work with our nurse educators in training staff on proper use of PPE, Thomas and Yajima both volunteered to take on roles in our Houston Area Locations, providing mid-level APP coverage in our ATCs. Thomas and Yajima graduated from the fellowship in August and accepted APRN positions in Breast Medical Oncology.
Adopting new technologies

From expanding virtual care options to creating immersive educational experiences, nurses embraced new technologies in 2020 to care for patients safely and efficiently, develop professional skills, and more.

Ramping up virtual care

Beginning in April, virtual visits were offered to outpatients to ensure continuity of care and to limit the number of people on our campuses. Ambulatory nurses participated in virtual visits by pre-charting and calling patients ahead of their appointment to reinforce education, explain how to use the technology and ensure patients were comfortable using it before their first video appointment. Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) conducted virtual visits for new and established patients, both within Texas and other states. In 2020, nurses, advanced practice providers (APPs) and physicians participated in more than 114,000 virtual visits.

Engaging patients in their care

Inpatient nurses began providing hospital patients with MD Anderson iPads enabled with MyChart Bedside to improve their experience. This inpatient Epic module allows patients to learn about their inpatient care team, access their health information and know what to expect during their hospital stay. Patients are able to see vital signs, medications, lab results, education, as well as their upcoming schedule and expected discharge date. In addition, patients can use their hospital-issued iPads to read assigned education topics and view handouts and videos from MD Anderson’s Patient Education Online. Our Nursing Informatics team trained inpatient nurses and patient services coordinators on application functionality, as well as how to provision the iPad for interested patients and help them get started. Each day, about 25% of currently admitted patients have MyChart Bedside activated.

Staying connected

With visitor restrictions limiting the number of people on our campuses during COVID-19, our nurses stepped in to provide extra comfort and support for patients. Patients were encouraged to use their personal devices and mobile apps to connect with loved ones when possible and a plan was devised to ensure that patients without personal devices had the opportunity to connect with their loved ones, as well. More than 800 iPads were deployed to inpatient nursing units for patients to use with MyChart Bedside and for virtual family visits. Nurses often assisted patients to use the virtual apps to visit with their families and caregivers, whether it was simply to check in and provide updates, give family members the chance to see each other for the first time in days/weeks, or provide closure before a loved one passed. Using technology to connect inpatients with their loved ones will continue into the future – especially for any circumstances where visitors cannot physically come to MD Anderson.

Julie Ngo, assistant nurse manager in the Head and Neck Center, talks to a patient during a telemedicine virtual visit.
Lessons in virtual reality

Learning new skills that require hands-on practice while also keeping nurses safe is an issue that has been brought to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Nursing eLearning team led by Venice McDougle, associate director of Nursing Programs, has created an immersive educational model to strategically guide the creation of learning experiences using virtual reality and augmented reality technology. The team has received final approval to copyright the educational model and has begun developing educational simulations on pressure injury and fall prevention, CAR T-cell therapy and blood transfusions. Not only does this new method of learning move beyond traditional classroom lecture-based teaching, but it keeps nurses at a safe distance and embraces more hands-on experiential learning, which can improve retention of skills and competencies.

Building confidence through PICU simulations

In collaboration with the MD Anderson Simulation Center, Linette Ewing, D.O., assistant professor of Pediatrics, and Katie Gardner, APRN, Pediatrics, developed a simulation room located in the G9 Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) with the goal of allowing easier access to run multidisciplinary team simulations. The room was tailored specifically to the unit’s needs and includes both child and baby simulation mannequins and the ability to use the same equipment, supplies and technology as the institution’s simulation center to provide a high-fidelity simulation experience. Nurses, respiratory therapists, APPs and physicians have participated in several beneficial simulations, including COVID-19 Code Blue and intubation simulation scenarios specific to the pediatric population. Gaps in knowledge and protocol were identified and participants reported feeling more confident with initial management of a COVID-19 positive pediatric patient who acutely decompensates. In addition, the PICU and Blood Bank teamed up to test the institution’s massive transfusion protocol by simulating a pediatric oncology case of emergent bleeding. After the one-hour simulation event, the team recognized areas of improvement in team coordination, communication and process delays.

Going remote

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became vital to leverage virtual technology to perform functions that could be done in a remote capacity. The Department of Case Management (CM) was an early adopter of this concept, transitioning 75% of staff from on-site to a remote status within a short timeframe. This initiative required close coordination with their primary teams, cross-training and an expeditious learning curve in how to use the required systems remotely. Case managers performing on-site functions partner with remote case managers and case management assistants to coordinate post discharge needs, such as equipment or referrals for home health or home hospice. Frequent touch points between the partners throughout the workday maintain the communication momentum required for efficient coordination of care. Patients and caregivers remain connected through a phone or iPad to discuss their choices and agreement with the discharge plan. This hybrid model has met the needs of our staff, care teams, patients and caregivers. As a result, many staff will remain remote, as they have resources to interact with insurance companies electronically and complete the process from their home.

Edwin Garcia, senior nursing instructor, walks through an educational simulation on pressure injuries.
Magical moments lift patients’ spirits

West Houston Nurse Manager Natalie Sanchez and her colleagues devise creative ways to lift patients’ spirits and lessen their anxieties during the pandemic.

Natalie Sanchez knows that entering a treatment center like MD Anderson for the first time can be very intimidating for a newly diagnosed cancer patient.

“Most patients bring family members or friends along for support,” says Sanchez, a nurse manager at MD Anderson West Houston. “But now that MD Anderson has adopted a ‘no visitors’ policy to protect patients from the coronavirus, they’re having to go to appointments alone. It’s sad to see them walk through the door by themselves.”

Sidewalk notes provide encouragement during coronavirus pandemic

Sanchez and her co-workers have devised some creative ways to lift patients’ spirits and lessen their anxieties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Take, for instance, the colorful sidewalk chalk creations that greet patients before they enter the building.
Some drawings are whimsical, like the bumble bee with the “bee happy” message, or the bright yellow star that urges patients to “keep shining.” Others offer notes of encouragement printed in block letters, like “stay strong,” or simply, “hope.”

Sanchez and business manager Jacque Andrepont were the first to decorate the sidewalk, with help from their spouses and children. Now, others are pitching in.

“Our patients love it,” Sanchez says. “They go out of their way not to step on the drawings.”

The artwork has inspired some patients to paint rocks with encouraging messages like “never give up,” and “spread kindness,” which they place in the hospital’s colorful gardens.

“Small things can turn into beautiful moments,” Sanchez says.

Creativity gets family included in bell ringing despite COVID-19 precautions

Another meaningful moment occurred recently when a patient rang the ceremonial bell inside the hospital to signal the end of her radiation treatment.

“She really, really wanted her husband to watch her ring that bell,” Sanchez explains, “but the ‘no visitors’ policy prevented that.”

Or did it?

Sanchez and occupational therapist Camiella Esaklul quickly brainstormed and developed a work-around.

“The bell is just down a hallway from an exit door,” Sanchez explains. “We used big, colorful letters to decorate the outside of the door with a message that read, ‘Peek inside – a warrior is ringing the bell.’”

As a security guard held the door open, the patient’s husband stood outside and watched as his wife – still inside – grasped the bell’s cord and tugged it tightly, ringing out over the end of her cancer treatment.

“He was crying, she was crying, we were all crying tears of joy,” Sanchez says. “There wasn’t a dry eye inside – or outside – the hospital.”

Sanchez watched as the now-discharged patient hurried out the exit door to embrace her husband. The two hopped in the car, and after weeks of staying in Houston for treatment, they drove home to South Texas.

“It was like watching two newlyweds head off on a honeymoon,” she says.

Magical moments that will outlast the COVID-19 pandemic

Visitors, too, are feeling the love. Family members who wait in the parking lot for their relatives’ appointments to end are greeted by staff who bring them water bottles and snacks from the cafe inside the hospital.

Sanchez vows that she and her team will continue their efforts to make patients and families feel “super special, like VIPs” long after the coronavirus pandemic has passed.

“We’ve set the bar really high, and we’re keeping it there,” Sanchez says. “Who knew there would be so much joy and so many magical moments in this time of uncertainty?”

*This story originally published in Cancerwise.*
EXCELLENCE
in Nursing

2001·2006·2010·2015·2020

Since 2001, MD Anderson has earned five consecutive designations by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet Recognition Program, the gold standard in Nursing.
MD Anderson earns fifth Magnet designation for nursing excellence

It’s a phone call that won’t soon be forgotten.

On Oct. 13, our nursing community received the official call from the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program announcing MD Anderson’s fifth Magnet designation. Magnet status is the gold standard in nursing and recognizes hospitals that meet the most rigorous standards of nursing in patient care, research, leadership and community service. MD Anderson joins an elite group of hospitals, as fewer than 20 organizations nationwide have earned five consecutive designations.

“Magnet recognition is so much more than an award”
Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements, about 30 nurses and leaders from across the institution gathered in Hickey Auditorium to listen in to the phone call between Chief Nursing Officer and Senior Vice President Carol Porter, D.N.P., and Chair of the Commission for the Magnet Recognition Program Jeanette Ives Erikson, D.N.P. The rest of our 4,400 nurses were invited to join the call virtually and celebrate at a safe distance.

“Magnet recognition is so much more than an award,” says Porter. “Our continuous Magnet designation is a source of pride for nurses, clinical and operational teams and all employees throughout MD Anderson. It’s part of who we are and, most importantly, it assures patients and their families that they’re in expert hands at MD Anderson.”

**Our Magnet journey**

Nurses across the organization submitted an electronic application that took several years to write. The final document included more than 80 sources of evidence, which highlighted examples of evidence-based interdisciplinary practice, nurse-driven excellence in quality measures, and nursing research.

More than 150 Magnet champions from across MD Anderson served as the backbone of Magnet-related education efforts, helping nurses understand the terminology and tools they needed to speak confidently with appraisers about their successes.

MD Anderson’s site visit in August was virtual for the first time in MD Anderson history. Appraisers visited inpatient units, ambulatory centers and procedural areas via iPads on wheels and virtual meetings to support the safety of patients, staff and the appraisal team. The appraisers validated our written document and verified that Magnet standards are enculturated across our organization.

During the visit, appraisers interviewed employees and patients to learn about our entire nursing community. Over 1,100 nurses, leaders, providers and staff across the organization engaged appraisers in meetings and area visits, logging over 57,000 minutes on Zoom.

“Our biggest challenge was making the virtual site visit feel like they were actually here in person,” says Jackie Anderson, Ph.D., Magnet program director and director of Nursing Quality. “We wanted the appraisers to ‘feel’ like they were experiencing the MD Anderson difference and our staff made that happen! The virtual site visit really reinforced the power of collaboration, engagement and creativity to achieve success in uncertain times.”
An exemplary performance

Studies show that Magnet hospitals tend to have lower mortality and infection rates, as well as higher patient satisfaction and nurse staffing levels. The Magnet Commission recognized eight examples of exceptional performance, including:

- The CARTOX Program, which oversees care for the MD Anderson’s CAR T-cell therapy patients
- The Hemovigilance Unit (HVU), a collaborative effort between the Nursing, Laboratory Medicine and Information Technology departments to monitor cancer patients before, during and after blood transfusions
- The organizational response to COVID-19 in which MD Anderson quickly enacted proactive strategies and precautions to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and protect its patients and workforce
- Data exceeding benchmarks in patient experience and chemotherapy extravasations in ambulatory

“The projects recognized by the appraiser team highlight the collaborative culture we are a part of at MD Anderson and demonstrates the teamwork needed to maintain Magnet designation,” says Debbie Cline, D.N.P., Magnet program co-director and associate director, Nursing Workforce Planning and Development.

A history of nursing excellence

MD Anderson was one of the first 50 charter health care facilities to become Magnet designated in 2001. This designation is one of the reasons MD Anderson is consistently ranked among the nation’s top hospitals for cancer care in U.S. News & World Report’s “Best Hospitals” survey.
What does it mean to be a nurse at a five-time Magnet designated organization?

“It validates the excellent work that we perform here every day.”

**Angela Yarbrough, D.N.P., APRN, Pediatrics**

“It validates the excellent work that we perform here every day.”

**Venessa Parker, case manager**

“We are changing the course for nursing and elevating the profession. Not only does our five-time Magnet designation speak to excellence in nursing, it also speaks to the level of interprofessional commitment to nursing and shows that nurses have an important and influential voice within the institution.”

**Shea Simon, D.N.P., associate director, clinical nursing, G12**

Proud. I work in the Hemovigilance Unit, which was one of the exemplars mentioned by the ANCC. It shows that MD Anderson keeps its commitment to patient safety.”

**Renato Aquino, transfusion specialist nurse**

“We are changing the course for nursing and elevating the profession. Not only does our five-time Magnet designation speak to excellence in nursing, it also speaks to the level of interprofessional commitment to nursing and shows that nurses have an important and influential voice within the institution.”

**Ameerah Jackson, clinical nurse, G22**

“MD Anderson has allowed me to grow and develop in my nursing journey. My managers always encourage me to learn more and keep going in my education to be a better nurse for my patients and community.”

“Nurses are respected and valued for the care they provide for our patients.”

**MeLesa Ritterhouse, clinical nurse, Surgery - League City**
“I am a part of a legacy of nurses who demonstrate excellence in patient care in our everyday practice. I can count on our MD Anderson nursing community to consistently be leaders in quality and innovative care for our patients.”

Mark Alonso, assistant nurse manager, Ambulatory Treatment Center

“‘I belong to an organization that is one of the best in the world and I am making a big difference in people’s lives.’

Genevieve Jumamil, clinical nurse
ASC Post Anesthesia Care Unit

“We have so much support from each other to learn, grow and deliver safe care.”

Karen Mayer, clinical nurse
Center for Reconstructive Surgery

“We have better job satisfaction and autonomy, and nurses feel empowered to speak up about potential safety issues. We are constantly improving our processes and recently created the Hemovigilance Unit to assist in averting errors during blood transfusion. The Hemovigilance team has been a great help to nurses, as they monitor vital signs, review documentation, and are always available to assist during blood transfusion reactions.”

Angela Ihemeje, clinical nurse, P10

“It’s truly a humbling and exhilarating experience. As we’ve dealt with one crisis after another the past year, our entire nursing body has called upon its greatest strength: compassionate professional service. We lean on science and utilize technology to protect, heal, comfort and cure one patient, one co-worker, and one loved one at a time.”

Rose Moore, clinical administrative director, Melanoma and Skin Center
Year of the Nurse goes virtual

The World Health Organization (WHO) designated 2020 as The Year of the Nurse and Midwife in honor of the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale’s birth. This acknowledgment of the founder of modern nursing united the world in celebration of the invaluable contributions that nurses bring to the health of the global population.

At MD Anderson, we honored the expertise and compassion of our nurses through numerous virtual events throughout the year:

- Several Grand Rounds featuring internationally recognized nursing leaders and researchers, including Joyce Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., and Deborah Mayer, Ph.D.
- Townhall celebration and special opportunity for nurses to recite the Nightingale Pledge and stand together in their commitment to the nursing profession and patient care
- Nurses Week “Shoutout” event recognizing teams and individuals from across the organization
- Panel discussion honoring MD Anderson’s military nurses
- APRN Week celebration featuring Loretta Ford, Ed.D., founder of the nurse practitioner movement
- Quarterly ethics discussions and monthly webinars to learn clinical best practices while earning Nursing Continuing Professional Development credits
- Interprofessional educational lecture exploring adverse events in children and adults, featuring Pamela Hinds, Ph.D., and Tito Mendoza, Ph.D.
- Quality Caring Awards ceremony recognizing 11 individuals and two teams for specific demonstrations of excellence
The 2020 Quality Caring Award recipients were selected from a record-breaking pool of 170 nominations.

Each nomination included a specific example that aligned with the caring factors of our Nursing Professional Practice Model.

Award categories were updated to include and recognize the diverse range of nursing roles that contribute to excellence in patient care. For the first time in the Quality Caring Awards 15-year history, one recipient was identified as the winner in two categories.

LaKisha Washington, clinical nurse leader, G10 East, said she was humbled to be recognized in both the Education and the Nursing Leadership categories. She was excited to share the moment with her mother, who was able to participate in the virtual event.

“Being selected as the winner for two Quality Caring Awards is a dream come true,” Washington says.

She paid tribute to her colleagues on G10 East, who were there for her after she lost her son two years ago.

“They let me know that I didn’t have to fight this journey alone and we’re family,” she says.

“I pay it forward to my patients every day so they don’t have to fight cancer alone – it takes a village. I enjoy making a difference for our patients and our nursing staff. That’s what it’s all about.”

**Award recipients:**

**Advanced Practice Registered Nurse:**
Angela Krach, advanced practice registered nurse, Stem Cell Transplantation

**Case Management:**
Karin Ewer, J.D., case manager

**Clinical Nurse – Ambulatory:**
Kristin Kurtz, outpatient clinical nurse, Nelly B. Connally Breast Center

**Clinical Nurse – Inpatient (tie):**
Mary Rees, clinical nurse, G11 East and Cara Mendoza-Auzenne, clinical charge nurse, Nursing P11

**Clinical Research Nurse:**
Vivian Al Jahdhami, research nurse specialist, Stem Cell Transplantation

**Education (tie):**
Emily Young, clinical nurse, G9 Pediatrics and LaKisha Washington, clinical nurse leader, G10 East

**Nursing Leadership:**
LaKisha Washington, clinical nurse leader, G10 East

**Excellence in Patient Care:**
Joel Perales, patient care technician, G10 West

**Rookie of the Year:**
Michele Brown, clinical nurse, G10 East

**Team Player:**
Raul Sembrano, patient services coordinator, G10 West

**Interprofessional Team:**
G12 Northwest Palliative Unit

**Nurse-Led Team:**
Ambulatory Treatment Center (ATC) – Tour Team
Sherry Adkins wins Excellence in Oncology Nursing Award

Sherry Adkins, an advanced practice provider (APP) supervisor in Lymphoma/Myeloma, received the 2020 Brown Foundation Award for Excellence in Oncology Nursing.

This award is the institution’s highest nursing honor and recognizes one outstanding MD Anderson nurse each year who delivers superior patient care and demonstrates a unique dedication to enhancing the quality of life for patients and families coping with cancer.

Adkins received a cash prize of $15,000 made possible by The Brown Foundation Inc., and a celebration in her honor. In 2020, the Brown Foundation added a $5,000 cash prize for finalists Ashley Martinez, D.N.P., APP supervisor in Breast Medical Oncology; and Angela Yarbrough, D.N.P., family nurse practitioner at MD Anderson’s Children’s Cancer Hospital.

A lasting impact

Since joining MD Anderson in 2008, Adkins has been part of the research team whose work ultimately led to the first Food and Drug Administration-approved CAR T-cell therapy for the treatment of lymphoma. As a cancer survivor, Adkins finds daily inspiration in providing care and compassion to patients and being a part of their cancer journeys.

“Nurses are the heart, mind and soul of MD Anderson,” says Adkins. “Of all the health care providers, nurses spend the most time with the patients. Every day, I am given the opportunity to provide excellent, compassionate care to patients with cancer and to give back what was given to me.”

One patient credits Adkins with providing the hope and reassurance she and her family needed to make it through a clinical trial. “Sherry was with us every step of the way... reassuring us that all of the symptoms and challenging side effects were normal and positive,” the patient wrote in a letter included in Adkins’ nomination packet. “I don’t know how my family and I would have persevered through this extraordinarily challenging time without Sherry by our side.”

The packet also included letters from colleagues and supervisors describing her unparalleled expertise, work ethic, and dedication to patients’ well-being, as she coordinates some of MD Anderson’s most complex clinical trials.

Sattva Neelapu, M.D., professor and deputy chair, Department of Lymphoma and Myeloma, says Sherry is the best advanced practice provider he has worked with during his 16 years at MD Anderson. He mentioned her many contributions, including the development of the CARTOX smartphone app that is a tool to help health care providers with grading and management of CAR T-associated toxicities at the bedside.

“Sherry’s innovative contributions to patient care over the last few years have made a lasting impact to improve the safety of administering CAR T-cell therapy not just at our institution but for patients around the world,” says Neelapu.
Top inpatient scores receive national recognition

For the ninth straight year, MD Anderson received national awards from Press Ganey for our ability to maintain consistently high levels of excellence for inpatients’ patient experience according to our inpatient satisfaction scores. The awards include the 2020 Pinnacle of Excellence Award in Patient Experience for maintaining consistently high levels of excellence over multiple years in Inpatient Care, as well as the 2020 Guardian of Excellence Award in Patient Experience for sustaining performance in the top 5% of health care facilities tracked by Press Ganey during the past year both for inpatient and ambulatory medical practice survey results.

Award winners were recognized at the virtual Press Ganey National Client Conference in November.

DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses

Twelve MD Anderson nurses received the internationally recognized DAISY Award for the extraordinary clinical skills and compassionate care they provide to patients every day. The nurses were nominated by patients, caregivers and peers through the DAISY Foundation, an international award program.

As a proud DAISY Award Partner, MD Anderson has recognized more than 70 deserving inpatient and outpatient nurses since 2012.
Three nurse leaders selected for prestigious fellowship

Joyce Dains, Dr.P.H., advanced practice registered nurse, professor and chair ad interim, Department of Nursing; Joyce Neumann, Ph.D., program director/APRN, Stem Cell Transplantation (SCT) and Cellular Therapy and adjuvant ethicist, Section of Integrated Ethics; and Susan K. Lee, Ph.D., program director and assistant professor for Health Care Disparities, Diversity and Advocacy, School of Health Professions; have been selected as fellows in the American Academy of Nursing (AAN). They are among 230 highly distinguished nurse leaders in the fellow’s class of 2020 who were recognized during the Academy’s annual conference, which took place virtually in October.

Those who receive this prestigious recognition show evidence of significant contributions to nursing and health care at the local, national and international levels. Selection is based, in part, on the extent the nominee’s nursing career has promoted the public’s health through evidence and innovation.

“I’m honored to have sponsored several MD Anderson candidates who have all been accepted into the academy,” says Porter, who sponsored Dains and Neumann in 2020. “This is a tremendous distinction that lets the world know our nurses are among the very best.”

A passion for education

An experienced clinician, educator and administrator, Dains has developed unique and high impact educational and clinical programs that transformed care and serve as models across the nation.

Among her many accomplishments, Dains developed one of the first comprehensive Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner programs, which are now standard. More recently, she developed MD Anderson’s APRN Fellowship in Oncology, which was the first of its kind and served as a blueprint for programs that came after. She’s also authored textbooks that have shaped the clinical practice of clinicians around the world, including Elsevier’s Seidel’s Guide to Physical Examination and Advanced Health and Clinical Diagnosis in Primary Care.

Leader in stem cell transplantation

With a nursing career spanning over 40 years, Neumann is a respected advanced practice registered nurse in the field of oncology and stem cell transplantation. She currently manages a team of 26 highly specialized APRNs who care for SCT patients across systems. In her work as an adjuvant ethicist, Neumann has led MD Anderson in promoting ethical nursing practice, elevating the standard of care leading to clinical excellence.

Neumann’s leadership and expertise in SCT and ethics is recognized nationally and internationally, and she is sought out for written contributions and presentations. She was PI on a major national study with the National Marrow Donor Program examining burnout, moral distress, work-life

Dains, Lee and Neumann say they are honored and humbled by the recognition and look forward to “carrying the torch” forward by providing mentorship and sponsorship to other nurses throughout the organization. They join Anecita Fadol, Ph.D., associate professor in the Nursing department with a joint appointment in the Cardiology department; Garry Brydges, chief nurse anesthetist; and Carol Porter, D.N.P., chief nursing officer and senior vice president, as MD Anderson’s current AAN fellows.
balance and career satisfaction among SCT nurses, physicians, pharmacists, advance practice professionals, and social workers. She also played a key role in the development of the Japanese Team Oncology Program, a US-Japan collaborative program since 2002.

**Advocate for the disadvantaged**

Lee is an experienced nurse educator whose research interests include homelessness, social determinants of health, and concept-based curriculum (CBC).

Lee’s contributions to CBC are an outcome of her active role in improving nursing education as a curriculum developer, course leader and educator. She has developed and disseminated coursework, case-study scenarios, and active learning strategies; presented at national and international conferences; and has taught in graduate/undergraduate nursing and allied health education programs. Lee was lead author on eight chapters in Case Studies in Public Health Nursing (2020).

Lee serves on the Advisory Committee for Homeless Veterans in Washington, DC, which advises the Veterans Affairs Secretary and Congress. She believes it is the responsibility of health care providers to identify and work with diverse populations who are at a disadvantage for health care resources and need health care advocates to improve their wellbeing. Eight of her homeless research studies have been disseminated at international presentations since 2015.
ANDERSON’S GOT TALENT

Brenda Rain Agot, a clinical nurse on G18, sang “Rise Up” by Andra Day as one of the top five performers highlighted during Anderson’s Got Talent: Home Edition.

Anderson’s Got Talent is a part of Employee Appreciation month in May, which includes a series of events and programs to honor the hard work and dedication of our employees. Rain Agot’s video audition was one of nearly 50 entries submitted. As one of the top five participants chosen by a committee, her video was shown in its entirety during a virtual watch party.

She chose the song ‘Rise Up’ because the message of the song is uplifting.

“Working during this pandemic is really challenging for all of us, especially for those of us working in the hospital,” she says. “I just wanted to remind everyone through the song that despite the adversity we’re facing right now, we will all rise above it.”

Awards and appointments

Maria Alonso
2020 Jennifer Kreykes-Pohl Clinical Coach Award
Awarded by: Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy Department, MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Lauren Ashley Anderson
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 1%) 
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Donna Bell
Dawn Gross Memorial Scholarship (doctoral degree) 
Awarded by: Division of Nursing, MD Anderson Cancer Center, December 2020

Veronica Brady, Ph.D.
Appointed to the Board of Directors for the Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (ADCES) 
Awarded by: ADCES, October 2020

Ninotchka Brydges, D.N.P.
2020 Excellence in Nursing Award (Bronze) 
Awarded by: Good Samaritan Foundation, October 2020

Camille Castillo
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner 
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020
Hannah Chaharlangi
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 10%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Linda Claret
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020

Mary Cline
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Robin Coyne
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 10%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Stella Dike
Finalist: 2020 Julie and Ben Rogers Award for Excellence
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, September 2020

Kachi Emukah
Dawn Gross Memorial Scholarship (bachelor’s/master’s degree)
Awarded by: Division of Nursing, MD Anderson Cancer Center, December 2020

Kimberly Foster
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020

Deborah Go
2020 Jennifer Kreykes-Pohl Clinical Coach Award
Awarded by: Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy Department, MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Anitra Hamilton
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020

Rachel Jacob
2020 Excellence in Nursing Award (Bronze)
Awarded by: Good Samaritan Foundation, October 2020

Roby Jacob
Angel with Hidden Wings Award
Awarded by: Division of Perioperative Services, MD Anderson Cancer Center, February 2020

Marita Lazzaro
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 10%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Ashley Martinez, D.N.P.
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 10%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Isela Murillo
2020 Jennifer Kreykes-Pohl Clinical Coach Award
Awarded by: Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy Department, MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Ana Nelson, D.N.P.
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 10%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Johnny Rollins
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer” Award (Top 1%)
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, October 2020

Maritza Salazar-Abshire
Finalist: Educator of the Year Award
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center, May 2020

Cindy Segal, Ph.D.
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020

Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Instructor of the Year Award for 2020
Awarded by: The Association of Pediatric Hematology Oncology Nurses, September 2020

Cindy Segal, Ph.D.
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle, May 2020

2020 Excellence in Nursing Award (Bronze)
Awarded by: Good Samaritan Foundation, October 2020
Michael Sevilla  
The Heart of MD Anderson  
Outstanding Employee Award  
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center,  
March 2020

Carol Stalzer  
The Heart of MD Anderson  
Outstanding Employee Award  
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center,  
May 2020

Megan Tanner  
Advanced Practice Provider “Top Performer”  
Award (Top 1%)  
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center,  
October 2020

Richard Victoriano  
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner  
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle,  
May 2020

Liney Vinu  
Salute to Nurses – Top 150 nurse winner  
Awarded by: Houston Chronicle,  
May 2020

Laura Ware  
Emma Josephine Loffelholz McNorris RN  
Spirituality Award  
Awarded by: Institute for Spirituality and Health at the Texas Medical Center,  
October 2020

Suzanne Wilson  
2020 Excellence in LEADership Award  
Awarded by: MD Anderson Cancer Center,  
September 2020