

# THE HIGHEST QUALITY CARE STARTS WITH US





## From the CNO

**Michelle O'Rourke, DNP, MBA, RN, CCRN-K, NEA-BC**

Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Care Services,  
UMass Memorial Medical Center

As you may know, I've spent my entire nursing career at UMass Memorial Medical Center. I'm thrilled that after more than 30 years, we finally have an annual report to celebrate nursing and all of your hard work.

This report showcases many of the areas that we're excited about and that align with the six standards of our Pathway to Excellence journey. We hope you feel a deep sense of pride when reading this, as it is a reflection of you.

2025 was a fascinating year for the Department of Nursing across the Medical Center. It helped set the tone for what the next several years will look like as we strive to:

- Reenergize our shared governance.
- Make our Excellence journey through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) a success.
- Ensure our nurses feel this organization supports them in their practice, includes them in shared decision-making and makes them feel a part of a positive healing environment for both our patients and our caregivers.

The official launch of the North Pavilion in January, of course, was one of the most notable milestones. UMass Memorial Health purchased the former Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in August 2021. It's hard to believe we were able to open the Pavilion, creating 72 beds for patients, just three-and-a-half years later.

In March, we had the honor of hosting Tena Barnes Carraher, one of the co-founders of the DAISY Foundation, at the Medical Center. Tena is the widow of J. Patrick Barnes, the inspiration for the foundation. Some of our DAISY honorees and members of our DAISY committee met with Tena to share the impact DAISY has had on them along with best practices for the DAISY program.

In July, the integration of the Medical Center and Marlborough Hospital received approval from public health regulators. On January 1, 2026, we welcomed our new colleagues to the Medical

Center. We can't wait to get to know them and work with them to continue elevating clinical excellence.

The NextGen Workforce Program, a work-based learning program for high school students interested in exploring careers in health care, continues to flourish. We look forward to seeing many of the participants become caregivers in the future.

In reading this report, you'll also notice quotes from patients and caregivers. We hope that highlighting their experiences will inspire you in your practice.

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# Strength in Leadership: Inspiring Nursing Excellence Together



I'm so very impressed with the teamwork, the courtesy and the professionalism of all staff. I have no words to say enough thank you for all the good care I got and that gave me back my life. I also want to thank the ER staff for calling my doctor so she could be involved in all decisions for my safety. Wonderful team at surgery room and IC. Thanks to all doctors and nurses. May God bless you all."

— Inpatient

Our nursing leaders — who include assistant nurse managers, nurse managers, nurse education safety specialists, nursing professional practice specialists, directors and senior directors — continue to be the driving force behind our continued commitment to excellence.

In a rapidly changing health care environment, our leaders have provided the vision, influence and clinical expertise needed to position our teams to meet future demands. Through their guidance, we have fostered an environment of trust and compassion, ensuring every patient receives the highest standard of care.

In January 2025, we marked the opening of the North Pavilion, the success of which has been made possible by our nursing leaders'

The Medical Center held its first ever Innovators of the Year entity celebration last year as a precursor to the system-wide Innovators of the Year event in April. There were more than 50 nominees across four categories: Best Project, Best UBT, Best Team Idea and Innovative Leader. Jaime Caron, MBA, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, Senior Director of Acute Care Services, was honored as Innovative Leader of the Year for her fiscal year 2024 work. An Innovation Fund awardee and UBT co-sponsor, Jaime has submitted ideas 21 months in a row.

At our annual DAISY event in October, we acknowledged the leaders, educators and teams who model excellence in action — and are at the heart of everything we do. The DAISY award was created in memory of Patrick Barnes, who received incredibly kind and compassionate nursing care in the face of a disease that eventually took his life. We celebrate DAISY nurses each month and our leaders once a year.

Our leaders are focused on ensuring our patients receive high-quality care delivered by an engaged team of caregivers. We have achieved this through our newly relaunched professional governance structure, in which our leaders empower our frontline caregivers to drive excellence in clinical practice. (See page 7 to learn more.)

Of course, in reality, all our nurses are leaders. By empowering them with the tools and resources they need to succeed, we have successfully reduced turnover to less than 9% (compared with a national average of 21%) and stabilized our workforce, demonstrating how strong leadership can have a profound impact on both our caregivers and the people we serve.

2026 undoubtedly will yield even better results, as the passion of all our nurses propels us toward our goal of achieving the Pathway to Excellence designation.

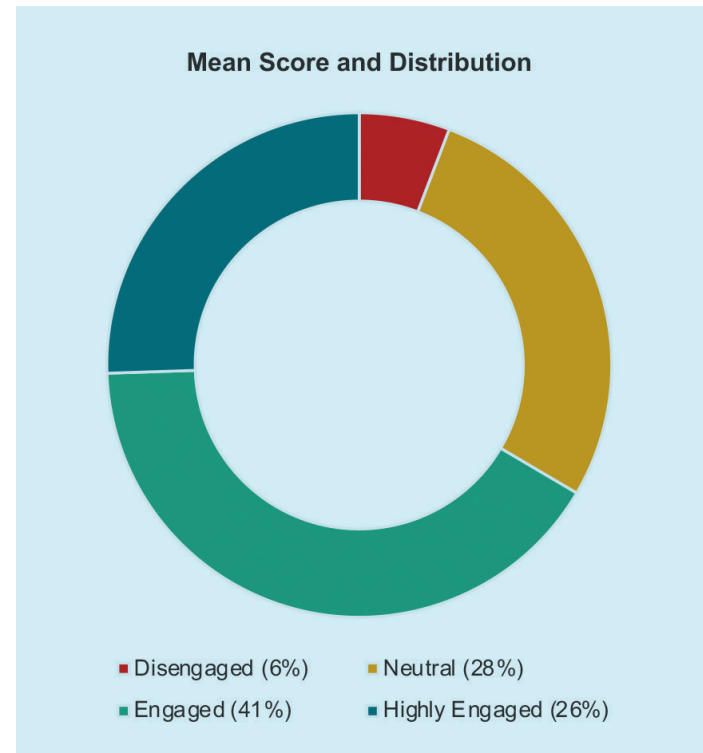


Jaime Caron, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, Senior Director of Acute Care Services, Interim Director of Critical Care Services, University Campus, accepts the award for Medical Center Innovative Leader of the Year.



# Caregiver Survey Results: Your Voice in Action

Last year, our caregivers took part in the Caregiver Survey, a chance to hear directly from you regarding engagement, resilience, well-being, diversity and inclusion, safety culture and nursing excellence. Your feedback allows us to identify what's working well and where we can do better. More than 1,300 of our nurses took the survey, resulting in a 3.93 engagement score out of a possible 5.



## Key Takeaways

### Here are some observations that stand out:

- We have an engaged nursing staff that feels included, fulfilled in their practice and respected by their leadership. Over 85% of respondents said the person they report to treats them with respect.
- Our caregivers overwhelmingly agreed that the organization has an inclusive culture and values individuals with different backgrounds.
- Eighty-seven percent of respondents felt their work unit demonstrates a commitment to patient and family-centered care.
- Our caregivers expressed that they have safe spaces to discuss ways to prevent errors, improve patient safety and raise workplace violence safety concerns to affect change.

## Areas Needing Further Focus

Around 52 percent of our nursing caregivers feel that their unit is adequately staffed.

- **How we're taking action:** Through our nationally accredited New Grad Nurse Residency Program, we're proactively recruiting, training and hiring the next generation of nurses in Central Massachusetts. With more than 200 hires, this initiative has had a tremendous impact on our vacant positions. We've also added new positions to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Emergency Departments (EDs), areas where we've seen a surge in demand from our community.

Fifty-six percent believe they have the opportunity to influence nursing practice in this organization.

- **How we're taking action:** In fall 2024, we began redesigning our professional governance structure with the help of feedback from frontline staff. Read more about these efforts and what they mean for you on page 7 of this report.

Fifty percent believe communication between providers, nurses and other medical personnel is good within the Medical Center.

- **How we're taking action:** Providing the tools necessary to facilitate constructive communication between teams is difficult but important work. In the months to come, we'll be focusing on further enhancing relationships between dyads to ensure understanding of the complexities of roles, empathy, and team building.



Nurses take part in the Professional Governance retreat in November.



## Health Excellence Equity Certification

This fall, the Medical Center reached a significant milestone by earning the Joint Commission's inaugural Excellent Health Outcomes for All certification (also known as the Health Care Equity certification). Hospitals receiving this honor demonstrate a clear commitment to upholding the highest standards of care, ensuring all patients receive fair, equal treatment regardless of their background. Our achievement represents a crucial step forward in our ongoing efforts to improve health equity within our organization and community.

As part of the certification process, a surveyor spent a day and a half at the Medical Center, engaging with multiple caregivers and learning about our mission, vision and values. These core principles guide our work in serving the community and providing the best possible care for our patients.

During their visit, the surveyor learned about several key programs that aim to expand access to care, including the UMass Memorial Health Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, the Road to Care, Hospital at Home and Doula programs. These initiatives are designed to meet the needs of patients who may face barriers to receiving traditional in-person care due to geographic location, financial constraints or other factors.

In addition, the surveyor conducted tracers in both inpatient and emergency areas across our University and Memorial campuses, including the North Pavilion and both EDs. This allowed him to observe firsthand how we tailor care to individual patient needs, such as considerations of language, cultural background and physical or cognitive abilities. The focus on personalized care is a cornerstone of our approach, and our caregivers' dedication to ensuring each patient receives the appropriate care in a way that respects their unique circumstances came through loud and clear.

At the closing conference, the surveyor shared his positive feedback with our leadership team, praising the exceptional work our caregivers do every day to support our patients and communities. He specifically noted the important strides we are making in breaking down barriers to care and working toward true health equity. While we recognize we still have a lot more work to do in this area, this certification is a strong indication of the progress we have made.

We want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all of our caregivers. Your dedication to providing compassionate, patient-centered care and to embedding health equity into everything you do is inspiring. The certification is a testament to your hard work and the impact you have on our patients' lives.

Together, we will continue to break down the barriers to care and ensure everyone has access to the high-quality care they deserve. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to this critical goal.



A superb practitioner. On both my visits to her, she has been knowledgeable, skilled, caring, responsive to my concerns, and clear in her communication. She addressed the problems I came in with and provided information beyond what I asked about.”

— Medical Practice Patient



Patient Rebecca beams with pride holding her baby. Rebecca utilized UMass Memorial's Doula Program.

# Excellence Journey Narrative

Pathway to Excellence is a designation that the ANCC awards to organizations that demonstrate a commitment to establishing a positive work environment for nurses. The designation celebrates organizations for having better clinical outcomes, higher retention rates of clinical staff and leaders, strong interprofessional collaboration and a high-quality patient experience.

Our Pathway to Excellence journey is a continuous process of organizational growth focused on creating a positive, supportive work environment where nurses and staff thrive. It involves aligning our practices with the six Pathway standards — shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, well-being and professional development — to foster a culture of excellence. This journey empowers staff, improves patient care and strengthens teamwork, ultimately leading to national recognition as a workplace where nursing and health care professionals feel valued, engaged and inspired.

Throughout this report, you'll see ways in which you, our caregivers, are embodying the six Pathway standards and creating a positive, engaging and fulfilling work environment that achieves top-tier outcomes for our patients and caregivers.

It's important to note that while this designation is led by nursing, this is about the work of an interprofessional team. Organizations that have achieved this designation have many positive outcomes, such as a high patient satisfaction score, increased caregiver retention and exceptional quality outcomes.

Throughout the last year, our Nursing Excellence team has been gathering information to document ways in which our Medical Center teams have been applying the six standards. We hope to submit for designation this spring, survey our nurses and achieve this designation in the fall.



I arrived at the ED after an episode of severe dizziness and HTN. I was treated promptly with VS, EKG, assessment and CT Scan of head. I was admitted for observation and further testing. Each staff member I met was professional and courteous, from the ED, CT Dept, Cardiac US, MRI and West 2. I was so impressed with everyone. The unit was exceptionally clean, and the staff was professional and attentive. The positive environment made my unexpected hospital stay easier.”

— Ambulatory Surgery

## Meet Our Nursing Excellence Team



**Karen Uttaro, DNP, RN, NPD-BC, NEA-BC**

Senior Director, Professional Practice, Quality and Regulatory Readiness



**Jaime Cesnickas-Doane, MS, RN, NPD-BC**

Director of Nursing Professional Development



**Lynn D'Angelo, DNP, RN, NEA-BC**

Director of Ambulatory Clinical Excellence



**Melissa Ryzewski, MS, RN, NPD-BC**

Nursing Professional Development Specialist



**Laura Fuertes, BSN, RN**

Senior Quality Informatics Nurse Specialist

# Professional Governance and Shared Decision-Making

Professional governance is an interprofessional, collaborative governance structure where members share in the decision-making that impacts professional practice. It offers a formal space where health care providers function as partners in problem-solving and driving improvements within the organization and frontline caregivers are responsible for making decisions and creating solutions.

The Medical Center has historically had a strong system of professional governance in place. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, bringing staff together to do unit-based work was not a priority — so professional governance fell by the wayside. Post-pandemic, reinvigorating our commitment to professional governance has been a point of focus.

One of the key components of the Pathway to Excellence is shared decision-making. This is the process by which caregivers and leaders collaborate to share accountability for practice, performance improvement and professional development, and to strengthen the interprofessional team.

To achieve this standard, we redesigned our professional governance structure with the help of feedback from frontline staff. We wanted to ensure our direct care nurses are part of the decision-making processes at the Medical Center. This work entailed multiple meetings with people previously involved with professional governance and conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis of the previous structure.

Fall 2024 through spring 2025 saw our first season of the newly designed structure. Chairs and co-chairs of unit-based councils participated in monthly service line councils. There, caregivers from similar service lines in other units discussed needs and concerns that the whole team reviewed on the path to exploring possible solutions.

“It’s a bidirectional flow that starts with the unit-based councils and moves up to the service line councils, the central council and finally the advisory council,” said Melissa Ryzewski, MS, RN, NPD-BC, a nursing professional development specialist at the Medical Center. “Then it moves downward, from the advisory council to the unit-based councils. So it’s a constant flow of communication up and down the chain.”

In fall 2025, the second season of professional governance started strong with all councils in place and actively contributing to service line needs. In November, the professional governance annual retreat celebrated a successful first year with a review of the work the service lines had completed, including:

- Mentorship pilots
- Collaborations with various hospital teams to improve equipment concerns
- Programs to assist with long-term patient needs

Positive outcomes of speaking with various service line teams have included:

- Better communication
- Increased engagement with colleagues in the same service lines from other units
- A feeling of being supported in the professional governance process

For 2026, our professional governance teams are looking forward to finalizing our professional practice model. It will be a visual depiction of the professional nursing practice at the Medical Center that captures what nursing means for us.

“We’re pleased that through surveys and feedback, the direct care nurses themselves are having a say in the development of this model,” Melissa noted.

Other exciting initiatives for this season include enhancing communication and idea generation for professional governance work beyond the councils.



Caregivers participate in the professional governance retreat in November.

# Patient and Family Experience

For the Medical Center, fiscal year 2025 (FY25) featured record-breaking achievements in patient and family experience. The Medical Center's Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) "willingness to recommend the hospital" score reached an all-time high of 75.2 Top Box, reflecting the growing trust and satisfaction of our patients and their families.

Across nearly all HCAHPS survey domains, performance improved over fiscal year 2024 (FY24), including a particularly notable gain in "nursing communication," which rose from 80.9 to 83.7 Top Box. Other areas of progress were seen in "responsiveness of hospital staff," "quiet at night" and "discharge information." Each showed meaningful upward trends that underscore our commitment to delivering compassionate, coordinated and responsive care.

A major highlight of FY25 was the opening of the North Pavilion Campus, which quickly became a model for excellence in patient and family experience. During its first two weeks of operation, members of the Patient- and Family-Centered Services team conducted in-person rounding with patients and families transitioning to the new space, fostering a smooth and supportive experience. The Pavilion's early results were outstanding, achieving top-decile performance among Massachusetts hospitals in eight measures, including "nurses listened carefully to you" and "staff described medicine side effects."

UMass Memorial also exceeded FY25 goals for its two key HCAHPS+ survey composites: "caregivers explained things in a way you can understand" and "caregivers listened carefully to you."

- "Caregivers explained" rose from 77.5 in FY24 to 79.9 in FY25, with the Memorial Campus leading performance at 82.9 Top Box.
- "Caregivers listened" improved from 78.1 to 81.2, with Memorial again leading the way at 82.9.

These measures draw from the nurse and doctor communication domains — both of which saw year-over-year improvement — reflecting the strength of our communication practices and our caregivers' focus on partnership and understanding.

The Maternity Center also made impressive strides in patient experience, implementing several new initiatives designed to enhance comfort, communication and family support. Highlights include the launch of a virtual orientation and tour video, expanded lactation support, the establishment of standard quiet hours, and increased caregiver recognition efforts — all contributing to more positive and memorable experiences for mothers and families.

FY25 also saw the expansion of the inpatient RN leader rounding program, including the introduction of an RN leader rounding



The University Campus 3 Lakeside Stepdown Unit team was presented with the Patient Experience Team Award.



Khahnty Daraphet, RN, was recognized with the Patient Experience Individual Award.



Kat Franson, RN, and Kristin Kowalski, RN, mark the opening of the North Pavilion in January 2025.

preceptorship. This model pairs experienced nurse leaders with new or developing leaders to strengthen their rounding practice. Through real-time coaching and mentorship, preceptors help build confidence, refine communication skills and model best practices for patient engagement.

Finally, as part of our ongoing Excellence journey, we launched the Memorial Acute Care Patient- and Family-Centered Care Transformation Committee, focused on advancing teamwork and performance to achieve 4-star ratings in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services patient survey.

# Workplace Safety

The Medical Center continues to explore new and innovative ways to keep our caregivers safe in the workplace and protect their physical and mental wellness. This year, two new committees were formed to complement the advances of our Workplace Violence Prevention Committee: Peer to Peer Support and Safe Patient Handling.

Each of these new committees analyzes organizational needs related to their focus areas, engages frontline staff in problem-solving and solutioning, and shares options for investment and progress with our Caregiver Safety Executive Committee.

Here is a look at three other 2025 highlights for the Workplace Violence Prevention Committee.

**AVADE advanced caregiver safety classes**, launched at the Medical Center in 2022, were expanded to entities throughout the system. As a result, over 5,000 caregivers have been trained in advanced techniques focusing on personal and patient safety along with de-escalation and awareness. Recent additions to our roster of certified trainers include three master trainers and 27 certified caregiver trainers.

In collaboration with leadership, this required education was introduced to the following areas:

- Children's Medical Center caregivers
- Psychiatric Treatment and Recovery Center, Emergency Mental Health, and 8 East
- University and Memorial EDs
- Life Flight, Worcester EMS
- Memorial West 1
- Memorial West 2
- Memorial float pool RN
- University 6 West
- University float pool PCA
- UMass Chan resident physicians (newly appointed)
- UMass Chan resident physicians (Children's Medical Center)

**Pediatric-BERT**, a specialized behavioral response team, allows caregivers in the Children's Medical Center to request assistance with dysregulated individuals, enhancing patient care and caregiver safety.

**DASA**, the specialized screening tool used in entities throughout the system, screens patients at triage and while in the ED utilizing prescribed mitigation strategies implemented in EPIC. Research at UMass Chan has led to three research publications validating DASA's use in EDs to effectively screen for aggression risk.

**Caregiver safety:** In fiscal year 2025, we saw significant, measurable reductions in reported harm events to caregivers following

the implementation of various workplace violence prevention programs. Highlights include:

- A 39% reduction in average monthly event occurrence in EDs
- A 41% reduction in average monthly event occurrence in non-med-surg areas
- A 14% reduction in total number of physical and verbal aggressive events compared to FY23

*Note: Med-surg inpatient remains flat, with only a 1.5% reduction in monthly events and total events in FY25. We will continue to explore opportunities for reduction and training in fiscal year 2026.*



Awesome evidence of protecting my safety, especially handwashing, assistance with mobility (locked wheelchair, guided, etc.) All were wearing ID and stated their name and role immediately. So grateful to have had this experience with such a caring staff!"

— Medical Practice



Caregivers from the Hahnemann Campus 4th floor phototherapy/dermatology area spent two hours revisiting workplace violence prevention topics following their AVADE Level 2 certification class in April 2025.

# Quality and Informatics

## Nursing Quality

Nursing quality and patient care are central to our mission and serve as the foundation for all clinical and operational initiatives. Our commitment to excellence in nursing practice ensures every patient receives safe, effective and compassionate care supported by evidence-based standards and continuous performance improvement.

Through collaboration, professional accountability and a culture of quality, our nursing teams actively contribute to achieving high-quality outcomes across all care settings. By integrating data-driven decision-making, adherence to best practices and a focus on patient experience, we continually strive to advance clinical excellence and health outcomes.

Nursing quality is not only a reflection of our professional standards but also a key driver in fulfilling our organizational commitment to deliver the highest level of patient-centered care.

The Medical Center Nurse Education Safety Specialists (or NESS, our unit-based nurse educators) play a vital role in optimizing patient outcomes by continually assessing and strengthening nursing practice at the unit level. They audit clinical practices to ensure adherence to evidence-based standards, identify gaps in care and collaborate with staff to implement targeted improvements. Through ongoing teaching, competency checks and knowledge testing, they reinforce critical skills and introduce updated best practices that enhance clinical judgment and performance. By supporting nurses' professional growth and providing real-time guidance, unit-based educators help create a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement that directly contributes to safer, more effective patient care.

Quality improvement initiatives are driven by data that highlights opportunities for better patient care. Educational initiatives aimed

at closing clinical practice gaps are driven by clinical metrics, audit results, patient feedback and outcome trends. By translating this information into meaningful insights, nurse educators help nursing staff understand not just what to improve but also why the change is necessary. They then design targeted education, skills training and performance support strategies to close those gaps. Through this data-driven approach, nurse educators ensure quality improvement efforts are focused, effective and directly linked to enhancing patient outcomes and the overall standard of care.

Here is a look at two NESS initiatives for FY2025 focused on optimizing patient care.

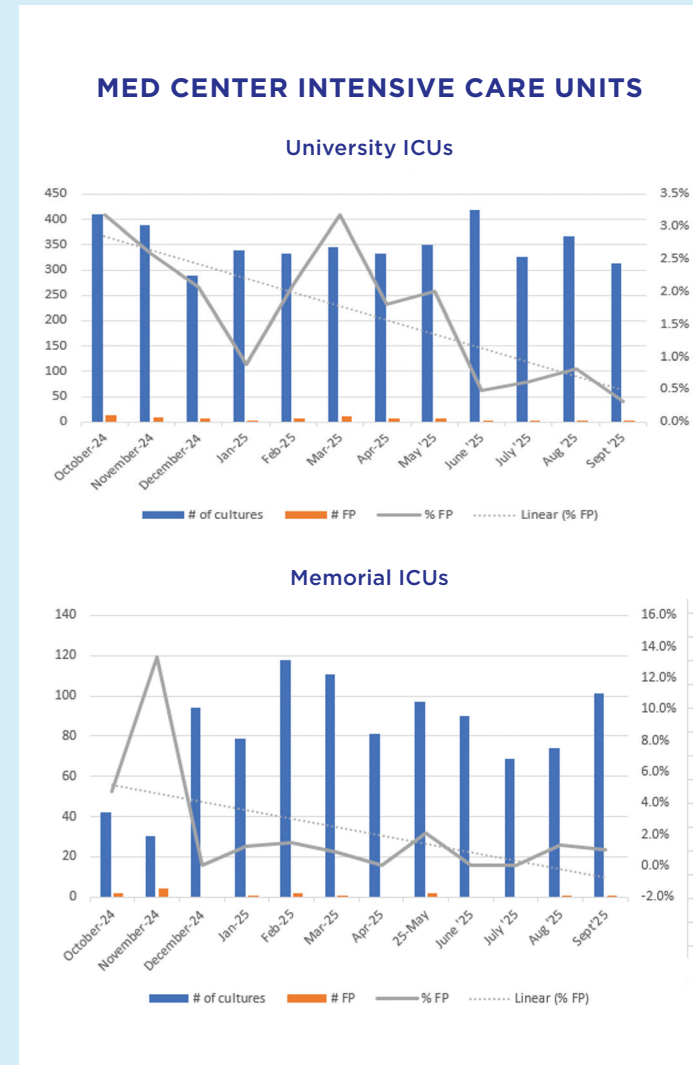
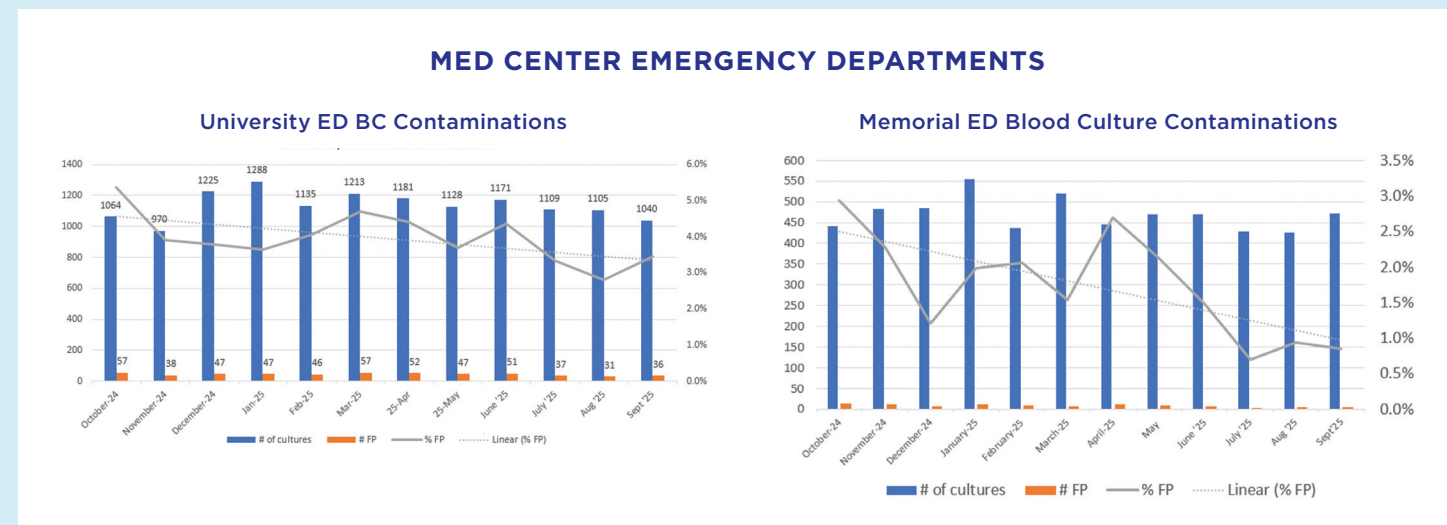
## Blood Culture Contamination Improvement

NESS representatives in the Medical Center's emergency departments and intensive care units found the practice of collecting blood cultures by nurses to be inconsistent with best practice, leading to higher-than-expected contamination rates.

In December 2024, the NESS team collaborated with nurses to provide targeted, hands-on training focused on proper aseptic technique and the correct use of the new Steripath blood culture diversion device. This education included demonstrations, return skill validations and ongoing coaching at the bedside.

We have since seen a steady and meaningful decrease in contamination rates across our EDs and ICUs. This sustained progress reflects the impact of evidence-based practice, focused education and teamwork on improving patient outcomes.

The following graphs illustrate a gradual reduction in blood culture contaminations during FY25:



- Knowledge-checking audits carried out by NESS, nurse managers and senior leaders

On September 9 and 10, staff from multiple departments completed the Joint Commission survey, demonstrating their health equity knowledge. The survey was successful and resulted in no findings or need for improvement.

These and other NESS initiatives demonstrate how Medical Center nursing leaders continuously use data as a foundation for driving meaningful, sustainable improvements in patient care. By monitoring trends in clinical outcomes and staff performance, we can identify areas where change is needed and prioritize interventions that have the greatest impact.

“ I am always treated like a family member by everyone I come in contact with from valet parking to check in to transport to my destination by a hospital worker as I use a wheelchair. And all my doctors and their staffs are AWESOME!!! They are the best team of care providers as I get the greatest treatment from them all very, very satisfied.”

— Ambulatory Services

## Health Equity Quality Improvement Project

Under the new Joint Commission Excellent Health Outcomes for All certification, Massachusetts acute care hospitals must demonstrate that they assess patients' health-related social needs, analyze quality and safety data to identify disparities, and develop a formal plan for addressing disparities. In spring 2025, the Joint Commission informed the Medical Center that our certification survey would take place between September and December 2025.

A group of multidisciplinary leaders subsequently developed an educational campaign to help all Medical Center caregivers understand health equity concepts along with their role in ensuring quality care for patients with disparities. The campaign, which stretched throughout the summer, included:

- Multiple presentations to nursing unit leaders
- Educational tools published on the Hub
- Direct staff education performed by the NESS team and other department leaders



Families in Worcester became first-time homeowners through our partnership with Worcester Common Ground (WCG). UMass Memorial Health invested \$400,000 in a revolving fund to allow WCG to quickly purchase and rehabilitate properties for first time homeowners.

# Professional Development

The Nursing Professional Development (NPD) Department supports the orientation, onboarding and professional development of our nursing and clinical support staff. They also promote evidence-based practice, ensure competency and help improve quality outcomes.

In FY25, the NPD team provided orientation for 461 nurses and 581 clinical support staff. NPD nursing professional practice specialists develop and facilitate professional development programs including:

- A preceptor class for nurses and clinical support staff
- A charge/resource class
- The Jewell Palliative Care Scholar Program
- American Heart Association certifications
- A telemetry class
- A nurse shadow program

The NPD's Office of Student Affiliations collaborates with approximately 100 schools to support the onboarding and clinical education of nursing and allied health students, including over 2,000 students in FY25.

## New Graduate Nurse Residency Program

The New Graduate Nurse Residency Program promotes the professional development of our new graduate nurses, encouraging them to participate in organization committees and professional governance councils and to become preceptors and charge nurses.

In FY25, the New Graduate Nurse Residency Program welcomed 150 new graduate nurses through three cohorts. The August 2024 cohort celebrated the completion of the program in September 2025. An impressive 95% of the new graduate nurses successfully completed the program.

The New Graduate Nurse Residency Program, a nationally accredited program of the ANCC Practice Transitions Accreditation Program (PTAP), provides evidence-based curriculum and a supportive learning environment for new graduate nurses to transition to practice. The program was initially accredited in 2021. In FY25, we were reaccredited with distinction — the highest award ANCC grants to organizations for their residency programs.

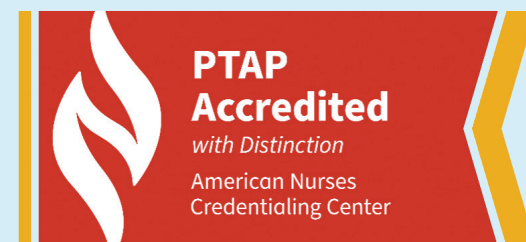
“This designation represents hours of mentoring, coaching and developing the most comprehensive program possible,” said Karen Uttaro, DNP, RN, NPD-BC, NEA-BC, Senior Director, Professional Practice, Quality and Regulatory at the Medical Center. “This is all made possible through our Nursing Professional Development team, nurse managers, assistant nurse managers, nurse education safety specialists, the nursing executive

team and especially Jaime Cesnickas-Doane, MS, RN, NPD-BC. Their unwavering support for excellence in the new grad journey was essential.”

The reaccreditation process included:

- Writing a 300-page self-study describing how the New Graduate Nurse Residency Program meets the ANCC PTAP program's national standards
- The new graduate nurses completing a survey to share their perceptions of the New Graduate Nurse Residency Program
- A virtual visit conducted with the PTAP appraisal team to provide an opportunity for those involved in the program to clarify, verify and amplify the program

Twenty-nine participants, including seven new graduate nurses, took part in the virtual visit. The appraiser team hailed the program for its commitment to and support of new graduate nurses in their transition to practice. They were especially impressed with the new graduate nurses' participation and professional responses during the visit.



One of the 2025 New Grad Nurse Residency Program cohorts is officially welcomed to the Medical Center at an orientation event.



Our fall 2025 Jewell Palliative Care Scholar Program participants.

## Jewell Palliative Care Scholar Program

Palliative care is a team-based approach to care that can be started at any time during a serious illness, providing an extra layer of support to help manage symptoms and align care with the patient's goals.

The Jewell Palliative Care Scholar Program is an eight-session course offered each year in the fall and spring. It aims to assist course participants by increasing the knowledge of the palliative patient and empowering staff to be leaders in palliative care planning. Course topics include symptom and pain management, communication skills, ethical issues and finding hope and meaning in illness.

The course had 14 participants in spring 2025 and 17 participants in fall 2025. Participants included nurses from all specialties, nurse navigators, social workers, registered dietitians and advanced practice providers. Here are anonymous reflections from two class participants:

“This course has been incredibly informative! I feel better suited to advocate for my patients, help deliver proper and effective pain management and help them attain the quality of life that they are looking for.”

“We have learned to be better communicators and treatment facilitators. Not only have I gained direction and confidence in advocating for patients, but I now know how to have the hard conversations that we are often afraid to have.”

## Nurse Shadow Program

The Nurse Shadow Program gives our nurses the opportunity to shadow nurses from other departments that they may want to work in or would like to learn more about. Introduced in 2023, the program aims to improve nurse satisfaction and staff retention while also promoting the professional development of nursing staff.

In FY25, 95 nurses applied for and participated in a shadowing experience. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Here are anonymous reflections from two participants:

“Gave a good idea of what the workflow is like and was able to learn about nursing in this area.”

“The shadow experience was a great opportunity to explore other fields in nursing. When you are in a position within the hospital, you rarely get to see how other units are. It's tough when you might want to try a new area but are unsure if you will like it/fit in well. This experience allows you to get a sense for the unit and makes your decision on what is right for you and your work career easier.”



The new grad program is great. It set me up for success in my nursing practice and allowed me to gain the confidence to be a competent nurse. The support and mentorship I was given has allowed me to progress in my career and facilitated a transition into a critical care setting once I felt that I had a stable foundation of my own personal nursing practice.”

— New Graduate Nurse Residency Participant

# Caregiver Well-Being

Working in a health care setting can be physically and emotionally taxing. That's why it's important to dedicate time to protecting and improving your well-being. As part of our benefits, many resources are available through Optum's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the Hub that provide a personalized approach to mental health. If you need support, please consider looking into these services:

## Relax Your Mind With Calm

To enhance mindfulness and help quiet your mind, the Calm app offers tools, breathing exercises and courses to help manage stress and anxiety. It also provides soothing sleep stories, meditations and soundscapes that can help you relax and fall asleep. To try Calm, scan the QR code below, then use the organization code Optum EWS and group code umassmemorial.



## Optum EAP Counseling Resources

All active UMass Memorial Health employees, dependents and household members have access to confidential counseling services, including:

- Personalized referrals to a network of clinicians
- Five in-person or virtual visits per member, per concern, per year
- Access to virtual counseling via Talkspace

The service also offers pre-verification benefits, meaning that Optum specialists will help match you to a list of in-network providers with availability, allowing you to coordinate scheduling sessions at your convenience. To learn more, call Optum at 866-263-3525 or visit [www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com) (access code: umassmemorial).

## Mindfulness Resources on the Hub

All UMass Memorial Health caregivers can access the following:

- Free virtual meditation sessions Monday through Thursday
- Discounted four-week online "Mindfulness for Managing Pain" and "Mindfulness Tools" courses
- Discounted eight-week online "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" and "Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy" courses.



We are absolutely blown away by the incredible care we received during our stay at the hospital. From the moment we arrived, we were met with kindness, compassion, and genuine care from every single person we encountered." — Inpatient



## Caregiver Well-Being Specialist Lynn Gerrits

We're so fortunate to have in-house wellness services provided by Caregiver Well-Being Specialist Lynn Gerrits. She's a trained health and wellness coach and mental health clinician with over 30 years of experience.

Lynn provides free on-site support to all Medical Center caregivers and leaders, including one-on-one consults and group meetings, huddles, consults, talks and trainings. She's here when you need her!

Here are some other ways Lynn can help:

- Wellness coaching (by phone)
- Hand massages and Reiki
- Brief solution-focused counseling
- Self-care techniques
- Stress management strategies and tips, including breathing techniques
- Mindfulness meditation
- Exploring appropriate resources

We're best able to care for others when we also take care of ourselves. Please use the resources available to you to make sure you're supporting your mental health and well-being. We're here to help you feel your best.

# Awards and Recognitions

## 2025 DAISY Award-Winning Nurses



Kayla Gerardi  
Labor & Delivery  
January 2025



Ann-Marie Martel  
Oncology Infusion  
February 2025



Olivia Townsend  
NICU  
March 2025



Carolyn Lynch  
3 West  
April 2025



Cederic Avola  
CDU  
May 2025



Tracy Bettencourt  
Pediatric Clinic  
July 2025



Megan Case  
Postpartum  
August 2025



Juliana Derr  
4 East  
September 2025



Matt LeClaire  
Pediatric ED  
October 2025



Izabela Cwalinski  
West Ground  
November 2025



Curry Beaudette  
West 2  
June 2025



Katie Rinnus, MSN, RN,  
Nurse Manager of West 2,  
East 2 and the Acute Care  
Float Pool, with the DAISY  
Nurse Leader Award.



DAISY Educator  
Award honoree Lauren  
Steiner, MSN, RN,  
OCN, Nurse Education  
Safety Specialist.



The 2025 DAISY Nurse-Led Team Award honoree was the Acute Care Float Pool Memorial Unit-Based Council.

## 2025 Be Exceptional Every Day (BEE) Quarterly Award Recipients



Phylcia Burgos  
8 North  
University Campus



Audrey Goldsborough  
West Ground  
Memorial Campus



Olivia Smaltz  
3 East  
University Campus



Rachel Trombi, MS  
NICU  
Child Life Specialist



Scan the QR code to nominate a nurse for our next winner

# Stay in the Know with News & Notes

## Read Michelle O'Rourke's CNO newsletter!

This is delivered to your inbox bi-weekly and has important updates from leaders, celebrations and shoutouts, touching patient testimonials and highlights our caregivers in their practice.

Learn more about the work your colleagues are accomplishing at the Medical Center! For example, our caregivers are experts in their field and often have work published! We're excited to share their work in News & Notes from the CNO.

We want your stories! Send us your excellence in nursing stories by emailing [MedCenterLeadership@umassmemorial.org](mailto:MedCenterLeadership@umassmemorial.org)!

### Recently Published Work from our Nurses!



Medical Center IV Resource Nurse, **Ketacha Maragh (left)**, MSN, RN, VA-BC, CRNI recently had her work published by the Vascular Access Certification Corporation (VACC).

Read her article, [The Top 10 Things I've Learned About Vascular Access Through Social Media](#).



A cutting-edge teaching hospital with over 900 beds and more than 9,700 caregivers, UMass Memorial Medical Center, with campuses in Worcester and Marlborough, is dedicated to ensuring the health and well-being of our communities across Central Massachusetts. With our academic partner, UMass Chan Medical School, we are the source of academic and clinical excellence in primary and specialty care, community service, teaching and research. We are relentless in our pursuit of knowledge and applying innovation and compassion to the care of adults and children, at the bedside, in the emergency department or operating room, in the clinic or community, or even at home.

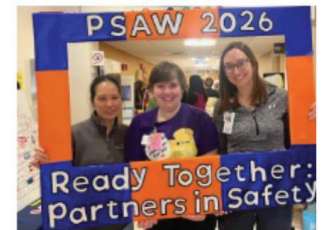
UMass Memorial Health is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 20,000 caregivers and more than 3,400 providers, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. We are the clinical partner of UMass Chan Medical School. Our comprehensive system includes UMass Memorial Medical Center, UMass Memorial Health – Harrington, UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial Health – Milford Regional and UMass Memorial Health – Community Healthlink. Together, we impact every aspect of life in the region by making health and wellness services available to everyone, at the bedside, in the clinic or community, or even at home, advocating for social equality and providing economic stability and opportunity. There are many ways to heal. We pursue them all. Relentlessly. Visit [www.ummhealth.org](http://www.ummhealth.org).

General information: 508-334-1000

### SHOUTOUTS

#### Thanks for Celebrating Patient Safety Awareness Week!

Last week, we recognized **Patient Safety Awareness Week**. This year's theme was "Ready Together: Partners in Safety." It was a great week celebrating and thanking our caregivers for all they do every day to make the Medical Center a safe place to give and receive care. Highlighted events include Patient Safety Expos throughout the Medical Center, Quality and Safety Grand Rounds on Tuesday, leadership rounding, and virtual games on the Hub. Check out photos below from this week's Patient Safety Expo!



#### Oh Baby! Maternity Center Welcomes Triplets Highlighting Evidence-Based Practice

