



FY 2020

Nursing Year in Review

uchealth

A letter from Elizabeth B. Concordia.

As a global pandemic unlike any we've seen arrived in 2020, the nurses at UCHealth responded with kindness, expertise and resilience.

Across our 12 hospitals, they donned N95 masks and gowns to care for patients with COVID-19, some of them very sick. When necessary visitor restrictions caused these patients to go weeks without seeing their loved ones in person, our nurses held their hands. They held iPads so patients could see their families and friends.

With relatively little time to prepare, our nurses made sacrifices and put much of their lives on hold to ensure every patient received the best, most attentive care. This year brought unprecedented challenges. It also created opportunities to make an immense difference in people's lives.

I'm honored to share with you some of our nurses' many accomplishments in this 2019-2020 UCHealth Nursing Year in Review. Their innovations and achievements continue to move UCHealth forward as a leader in health care.

The UCHealth Virtual Health Center expanded remote sepsis monitoring to all of our hospitals, providing an extra layer of vigilance to protect inpatients. For our patients with COVID-19 who were well enough to go home but had elevated risks, we provided at-home monitoring using an FDA-approved device fitted to the wrist and finger, connected to a smartphone.

Behavioral health is a high priority for UCHealth. And I'm proud of the work our nurses did to advance care, working with a software developer to create specialized training modules that ensure consistent, compassionate response no matter the UCHealth location.

As we continue to improve lives, I am deeply grateful for the essential role of our more than 8,000 nurses.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth B. Concordia

Elizabeth B. Concordia
President and Chief Executive Officer, UCHealth

A letter from Katherine Howell.

This year brought the kinds of moments that magnify a team's strengths as well as its vulnerabilities. At UCHealth, I'm in awe of how our nurses took on COVID-19.

They brought warmth to the most frightening, isolating time in many patients' lives. They supported each other, lifting spirits amid uncertainty. They collaborated among units, departments and hospitals to maintain their commitment to our patients.

Beyond the pandemic that disrupted lives around the world, our nurses also pressed forward with innovations and research to care for our patients. We're helping them recover faster and better from surgery. We're redoubling our focus on maternal safety, and we're improving approaches to reducing common infections.

We're also making work more enjoyable for nurses. Project Joy, our continuing effort to give nurses more time with patients and less entering electronic records at a computer, received national recognition. Up to 18 minutes per shift were saved. Throughout UCHealth, we introduced HeartMath™, which uses science and technology to help reduce stress and anxiety.

This year, we celebrated important accolades. UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital celebrated its fifth ANCC Magnet Designation, an accomplishment few have achieved. Kristen Boettcher, a UCHealth charge nurse, won the ANCC National Magnet Nurse of the Year for empirical outcomes, and our UCHealth Nurse Residency Program received CCNE accreditation.

These outcomes are made possible through the professionalism, expertise and compassion of our nurses working together to support our patients. I'm so proud of them.

Sincerely,



Katherine Howell

Katherine Howell
Chief Nursing Executive, UCHealth
Chief Nursing Officer, University of Colorado Hospital

UCHealth CNO Council

Katherine Howell, MBA, BSN, RN, NEA-BC

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Chief Nursing Officer
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Director of Hospital Acute Care Services,
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Medical Center of the Rockies

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Chief Nursing Officer, Greeley Hospital

Julie Nunley, MBA, BSN, RN

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer,
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Chief Nursing Officer
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Director of Value Analysis
UCHealth Supply Chain Management

Our mission.

We improve lives. In big ways through learning, healing and discovery. In small, personal ways through human connection. But in all ways, we improve lives.

Our vision.

From health care to health.

Our values.

Patients first.

Integrity.

Excellence.



UCHealth at a Glance



1,927

available beds



3,967,546

clinic visits



141,452

admissions, observation visits
and urgent care visits



13,340

babies delivered



489,519

emergency department visits

UCHealth Nursing Quick Facts

7,950
total RNs
(all areas)

BSN rate
82%

MSN rate
6%

DNP/PhD
5%

 **44**

DAISY Awards

 **8**

Colorado Nightingale
Luminary Awards

 **35**

research studies

ANCC Magnet[®] recognized facilities.



Poudre Valley Hospital
2000, 2004, 2009,
2014, 2018



University of Colorado Hospital
2002, 2005, 2010, 2014, 2020



Medical Center of the Rockies
2010, 2016

Transformational Leadership

As the global COVID-19 pandemic approached Colorado in early 2020, UCHealth nurses rose to the challenge, frequently taking on different roles. The collaboration among nurses based in hospitals and clinics underscored the compassionate power of nursing throughout UCHealth.

Professional Development **Preparing for a surge.**

Expecting a significant COVID-19 patient surge, it became evident that we would need to use innovative staffing models. Nurses who've spent years working away from the bedside were asked to take part in "skills refresher" sessions along with perioperative, OR and ambulatory nurses. More than 1,000 nurses completed the sessions.

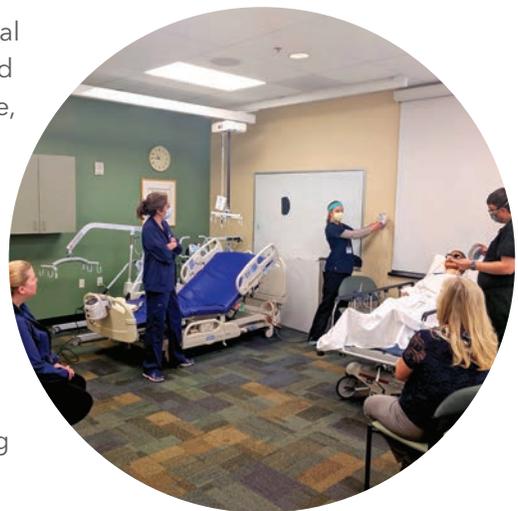
At four locations across the system, nurses reviewed catheter care, oxygen maintenance, starting IVs and more. Maude Becker, director of professional development for the UCHealth Northern Colorado Region, received the call to move forward on March 14, a Saturday. Her team was ready to go Monday morning—training 55 nurses that day.

"We limited sessions to five learners per room, plus an instructor," Becker said. "We were very conscientious about cleaning and social distancing."

Shonna Gigante, manager of clinical education and professional development for the UCHealth Southern Colorado Region, said her team was ready to go after one weekend. "Their supportive, 'can-do' attitudes never cease to amaze me," she said.

Most of the skills refresher sessions were conducted in person, but online sessions were offered as well.

"The professional development team is always ready to quickly meet educational needs," Becker said. "This was a heavy lift. We felt responsible for making sure our nurses felt comfortable with their knowledge and skills as they were going out to the units to provide patient care."



UCHealth Patient Line

Nurse triage line steps up for COVID-19.

The nurse triage line for COVID-19 went live March 9 to screen patients who were symptomatic before arriving at a clinic. Over the next couple weeks, the total call volume handled by the telephone triage team increased 303% over 2019 call volumes.

Call-center hours expanded to 12 hours per day, including weekends. The number of nurses working the patient call lines expanded from four to 40, with ambulatory nurses from across UCHealth stepping into this unique role to meet our patients' needs.

"Telephone triage is the equivalent to a carpenter building a wall without a hammer," said Zachary Benton, director of operations for the UCHealth Patient Line. "You can't lay your eyes on the caller or gently touch them or assess (the patient) utilizing tools such as a stethoscope. You're having to ask appropriate questions in order to assess the root cause of their concerns."

From March 1 to April 28, the COVID RN Line handled more than 16,100 calls. "It was amazing how this team jumped into a unique specialty," said Jennifer Soper, nurse manager with the UCHealth Patient Line.



Community supports its nurses.

From donated snacks and refreshments to inspiring words and parades of police and fire trucks, local residents showed their support for UCHealth nurses, staff and providers as they responded to COVID-19.

Photo by Joel Blocker



Employee Health

Nurses answer calls from colleagues.

Before COVID-19, employee health at UHealth received about 70 calls per day. As the pandemic spread in Colorado, a hotline was quickly activated for employees. The first day, it received 745 calls.

"We were very surprised by the number of calls that came into the hotline on opening day," said Erik Taylor, director of employee health. "We were originally planning to close the hotline at 7 p.m. but ultimately stayed open until 11 p.m. to ensure we took every employee's call that was in the queue."

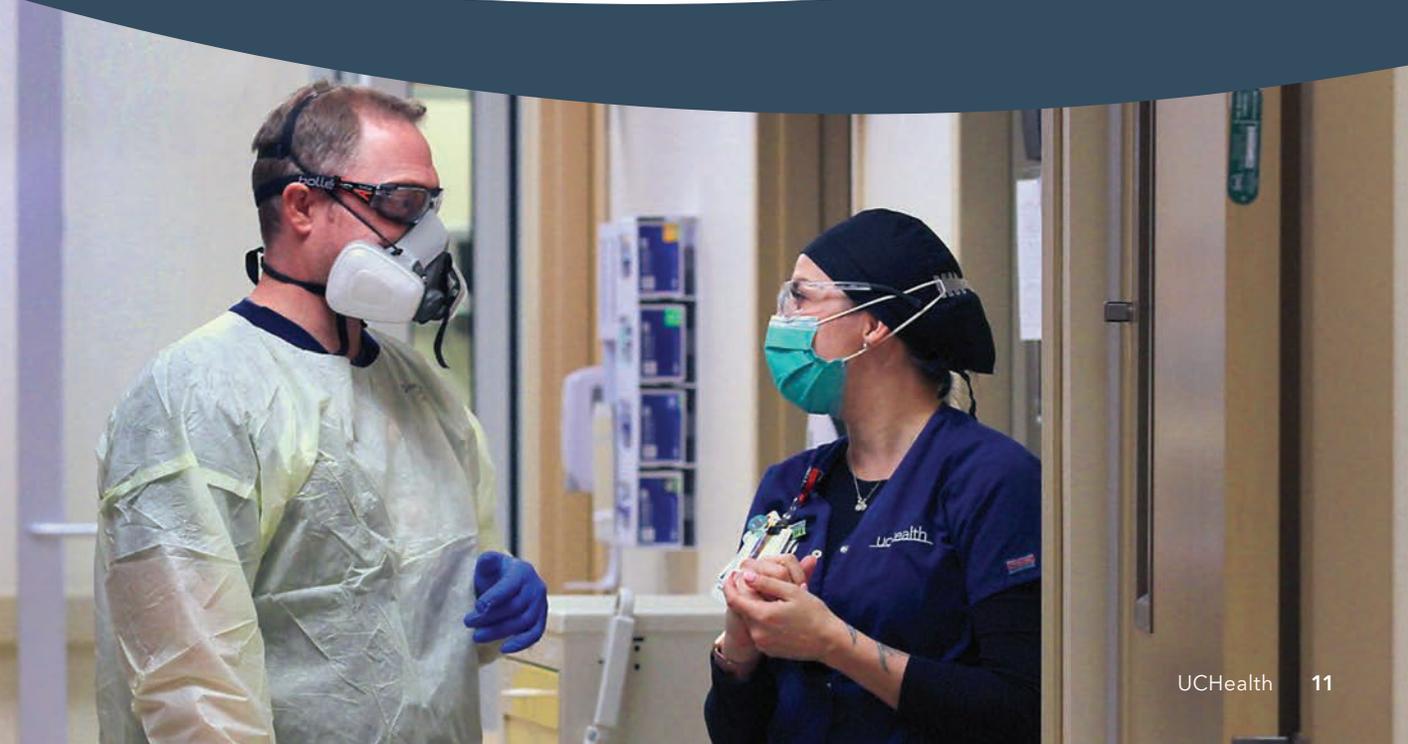
About 30 nurses from across UHealth's three regions were deployed to employee health to serve their fellow employees. They answered questions from employees concerned they may have COVID-19 symptoms or with questions about recent travel or contact with people discovered to be COVID-19 positive.

To support the hotline, Amy Hassell, director of patient services, and colleagues worked with information technology to set up 14 stations at the Virtual Health Center on the UHealth Peoria Campus in Aurora. The decision to use virtual support for employees was made on a Friday afternoon; the following Monday, at 7 a.m., March 16, the process was implemented.

"As health care providers, this pandemic forced us to evolve into something more, stepping up and filling in wherever necessary," said Cynthia Miller, a Pre-op/PACU nurse who commuted from Fort Collins to the Peoria Campus to serve on the hotline.

"I felt honored and privileged that I was not only able to step in where needed, but that the population I provided support to, were the very people I work with every day."

Photo by Joel Blocker



UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital and Memorial Hospital **Activating COVID-19 ICUs.**

UCHealth hospitals prepared for a surge in patients with COVID-19 by transforming ICUs and reassigning nurses who normally work in PACU, wound care, neurology and more.

The first COVID-19 ICU at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital was on the second floor of the UCHealth Anschutz Inpatient Pavilion, in the Critical Care Annex. The unit needed modifications, but within a few days, Critical Care Nurse Manager Mark Yoder and his team were ready with the supplies, equipment and staff to begin caring for patients. That created the blueprint for later transitioning the neuro and cardiac ICUs to care for patients with COVID-19.



"I can't think of a time when we've been able to have such a singular focus on one issue," Yoder said.

There was no problem finding nurses willing to care for these patients.

"We have amazing people who rise to the challenge," he said. "I'm really proud of the work we have done around this. The morale is high. We have the equipment and PPE that we need."

At UCHealth Memorial Hospital, Melanie Engler was promoted to nurse manager for the 2E Medical Surgical Unit in December 2019. A few months later, Engler and her team took on the task of becoming the dedicated COVID-19 unit for the UCHealth Southern Colorado Region.



Engler's team fostered innovative solutions to keep patients and families connected, collaborated with other units to ensure all nurses were up to date on rapid changes in procedures and supported every patient in their care journey.

Engler began her nursing career in the Nurse Residency Program in 2014. She took on roles that showcased her leadership skills and collaborated with peers on quality-improvement projects, becoming a charge nurse and assistant nurse manager at the hospital prior to assuming her current role. She entered the role with a vision to create a space where patients could thrive and staff would take pride in their work.



Photo by Joel Blocker

UCHealth Greeley Hospital and Yampa Valley Medical Center **Nurses support colleagues, care for COVID-19 patients.**

Less than a year after opening, UCHealth Greeley Hospital cared for patients with COVID-19 in one of the state's hardest-hit communities, where an outbreak infecting hundreds at a Greeley meatpacking plant made national news. The number of patients with COVID-19 at Greeley Hospital was exceptionally high.

Three nurses from UCHealth Yampa Valley Medical Center in Steamboat Springs made the 200-mile trip to help with ICU care at Greeley Hospital and support their colleagues. Amanda Castle, Andy Jacobi and Trentin Moya cared for critically ill patients at Greeley Hospital and reached out to their families to keep them informed and share messages.

"The Greeley ICU ran like a well-oiled machine with amazing teamwork, great communication and competent staff ready to help in any situation," Castle said. "Hands down, the most challenging part of this pandemic is that we couldn't allow family or friends to visit patients in the hospital, we essentially acted as family members and support people for patients."

Nurses helped patients use video apps to see their families. For patients with windows facing the parking lot, nurses helped to put items in the windows so family members outside could identify their loved one's room.

Amanda Johnson, acute care nurse with UCHealth Greeley Hospital, cared for numerous patients with COVID-19 as the outbreak spread. One of them had a family member who'd already been ill with COVID-19.

"When she became ill, she was absolutely petrified," Johnson said, adding that though she and the patient spoke different languages, the patient wanted her there while she was intubated. She held the patient's hand through the procedure, explaining what was happening through an interpreter.

"I think she needed that human touch—being so scared, she was just needing that," Johnson said.

Johnson said everyone on her unit supports each other, and that support has carried them through challenging circumstances.

Structural Empowerment

UCHealth Medical Center of the Rockies Honor walks for organ donors.

An honor walk is a gesture of support and respect for dying donors whose organs are about to be recovered to save others' lives.

The first UCHealth honor walk occurred in 2019 after Katie Asbury, nursing house supervisor at UCHealth Medical Center of the Rockies, saw it at other hospitals and wanted to bring this tradition to UCHealth.

"It's such a gift that this hero is giving to others," Asbury said, adding that the honor walk also brings closure for staff as we honor a patient "all of us cared about."

More than 100 people quietly line a hallway as the donor is transported to transplant surgery.

They are family members and loved ones. They are doctors and nurses directly involved in care, but also environmental services, lab staff and others. They are police officers, firefighters and emergency medical service staff. Because organ donors are frequently victims of traumatic injuries, first responders from the incident are invited.

An overhead page goes out 10 minutes ahead of the walk, encouraging available staff to make their way to the hallway. The compassion and the strong participation exceeded organizers' expectations.

Before an honor walk is planned, it is explained to the family, who has a choice to decline the gesture. Most families have said yes. Some families released balloons following their loved one's honor walk.

At least one honor walk occurred during the COVID-19 restrictions when participants wore masks and maintained social distancing.

Asbury in spring 2020 received a Magnet Nurse Award for Structural Empowerment, in part resulting from her role in starting the honor walks.



Photo by
Joel Blocker

Professional Development **Nursing Research Fellowship launches.**

Nursing research is integral to advancing the science of nursing. UHealth's inaugural group of Nursing Research Fellows began their 18-month pursuit of research in a mentored environment.

The Nursing Research Fellowship, open to clinical nurses across the organization, is a structured program to guide nurses through the research process and improve patient care. Two applicants per region are selected, receiving four paid hours per pay period over an 18-month span to transform their ideas into nursing research, analyze results and disseminate their research findings with the support of research nurse scientists and other UHealth nursing leaders.

The program continues with applications accepted each year in the fall, and the fellowships begin the following January.



The inaugural group of fellows, from left to right: Megan Reffel, David Kwoczala, Allison Jones, Georgie Adkins, Stephanie Harrel, Jennifer Barrett, Jamie Callahan and Heather Flimlin.



Professional Development

Perioperative Nursing Fellowship supports future OR nurses.

A shortage of operating room nurses is a concern for hospitals nationwide. The Association of Perioperative Nurses (AORN) reported in 2018 that within five years, 20% of perioperative nurses would be retiring.

UCHealth is actively recruiting OR nurses by creating the Perioperative Nursing Fellowship Program. The intensive six-month program is based on the nationally recognized AORN Periop 101 curriculum.

The UCHealth program uses a cohort approach by including nurses from across the system, connected through technology. The program is a blended model of didactic, skills and active experiences in the OR. At the end of two months, the nurse will move into an OR specialty and focus on mastering the circulator and scrub role. This mastery will allow the nurse to be integrated into the PeriOp RN role quickly and with greater confidence.

The Perioperative Nursing Fellowship provides a comprehensive learning environment to grow competent future OR nurses.

A national honor for an extraordinary nurse.

U.S. Air Force Brigadier-General and UCHealth Research Nurse Scientist Kathleen Flarity received the national Mary T. Klinker Award in 2020, honoring her exceptional career.

The Mary T. Klinker Award is presented by the Aerospace Medical Association for significant contribution to, or achievement in, aeromedical evacuation. The award is named for U.S. Air Force Captain Mary T. Klinker, a flight nurse with the 10th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron who was killed when a military transport aircraft crashed in April 1975 while evacuating Vietnamese orphans outside Saigon.

When she was 17, Flarity was accepted to nursing school but couldn't afford to attend. With her parents' permission, she joined the U.S. Army and served as a combat medic. Her military career now spans 40 years, including service with both the Army and Air Force.

Flarity served on deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Most recently, she was the aeromedical evacuation commander in Bagram, Afghanistan, where she was responsible for all air medical and critical care transport teams, transporting more than 3,500 patients.

As an experienced flight nurse, emergency clinical nurse specialist, nurse practitioner and UCHealth nurse for more than 10 years, she helped UCHealth Memorial Hospital Central achieve its Level 1 trauma designation and led research in compassion-fatigue and resiliency, among many other topics.

"Nursing is so rewarding, and there's tremendous growth opportunity," she said. "And UCHealth provides nurses that opportunity."

Flarity has a passion for teaching and mentoring; she's also an associate professor of emergency medicine at University of Colorado School of Medicine.



Exemplary Professional Practice

UCHealth Clinical Informatics

Project Joy gives nurses more time with patients.

UCHealth inpatient nurses save 18 minutes per 12-hour shift on flowsheet charting—that's more than 5,400 hours per year across the system—allowing them up to spend valuable time with patients, thanks to Project Joy.

The UCHealth-wide effort to streamline data entry for electronic health records brought efficiencies for acute care, critical care and perinatal RNs, saving more than 350 million clicks per year by simplifying the capture of pertinent clinical data.

"It's saving us lots of time," said UCHealth nurse Kristen Brodie, with the Neurosciences Center at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital. "I'm definitely able to spend more time at the bedside because of this."



Project Joy includes a committee of 55 participants with clinical nurses from all inpatient practice areas and regions and representatives from areas such as legal, risk, quality and regulatory to ensure optimizations align with all of the many uses of health records.

The burden of clinical documentation is a national issue. UCHealth's innovative work is getting noticed: The Project Joy team presented its work at multiple national conferences including the American Nurses Credentialing Center's 2019 Magnet Conference in Orlando, Florida. Project Joy was featured in Florence Health, a New York City-based publication for frontline health professionals, under the title "Meet the Team of Nurses Who Revolutionized Their Hospital's EHR System."

UCHealth Informatics Research Nurse Scientist Bonnie Adrian, who leads the project, said nurses have discussed the burden of lengthy electronic health record entries for years. Hospitals' legacy records systems were incorporated into Epic, becoming larger through years of improvement projects and adding more hospitals to the system. Over time, the records system became unwieldy.

The multidisciplinary committee achieved success, and Project Joy enhanced efficiency of UCHealth's inpatient electronic health record decreasing the time nurses spend documenting care.



Professional Development

Innovative learning platform drives excellence.

UCHealth nurses worked with an innovative, learning-solutions company to develop a behavioral health-focused, online module for staff and providers in acute care and ambulatory settings.

The module's scenarios include patients experiencing dementia, traumatic brain injury, substance withdrawal, disgruntled family members and more. The techniques primarily focus on verbal de-escalation, intended to help avoid the need to call security or use physical restraints. Trainees are encouraged to validate the person's feelings, listen attentively to what they're saying and avoid situations where more aggressive de-escalation is required.

"It's a need, now more than ever," said UCHealth Vice President of Professional Development and Practice JoAnn DelMonte. "Who knew that when we were developing this back in December, that our lives and the way we deliver care would be changing dramatically?" Amplifire, a learning technology company, is anticipated to offer the co-developed Behavioral Health modules to health systems across the country in partnership with UCHealth.

UCHealth and Amplifire also worked together on refining a CAUTI (catheter-associated urinary tract infection) training module that was completed by more than 5,000 UCHealth learners. In responding to questions, learners indicate their level of confidence with answers to clinical questions related to CAUTI prevention. The learning platform makes it easy to identify areas where improvement is needed, using heat-mapping to analyze knowledge gap trends. Those who answer incorrectly or without confidence receive further education to ensure clinical competence and promote patient safety.

UCHealth Primary Care Improving treatment for UTIs.

Patients with urinary tract infections (UTIs) receive better over-the-phone care and make fewer trips to clinics as a result of UCHealth nurse Taryn Arbayo's quality improvement project on telephone-triage protocol.

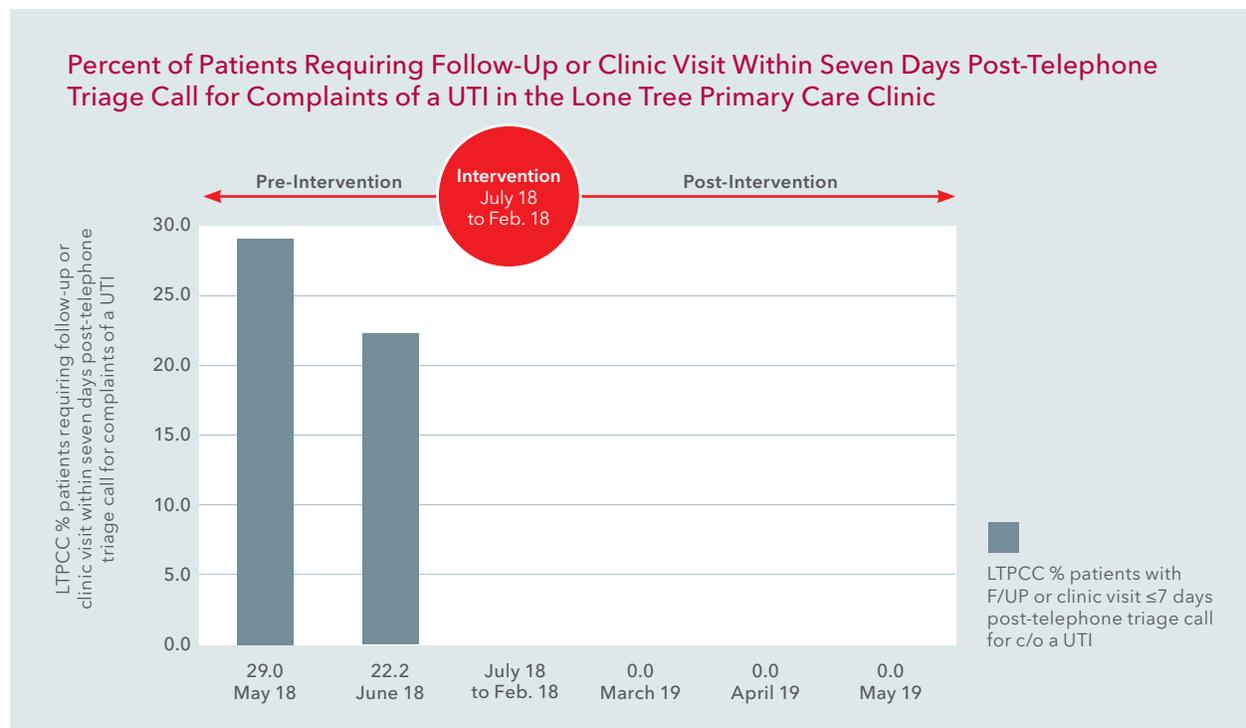
Arbayo is based at the Lone Tree Primary Care Clinic in metro Denver, which experienced a 42% increase in patient visits from 2017-2019.

Phone calls regarding UTIs, particularly among female patients, are common for the clinic. In May 2018, nearly 30% of patients who called complaining of UTIs required a clinic visit within seven days. Following Arbayo's project, that percentage dropped to zero from March through May 2019.



The project focused on three main interventions: developing an electronic health record synopsis dashboard, peer-to-peer feedback and resources. Arbayo created an evidence-based, quick drug reference guide available to all clinical nurses via the UCHealth intranet.

For her outstanding work, Arbayo received the prestigious Nightingale Luminary Award at the 2020 Colorado Nurses Foundation Metro Denver Regional Nightingale Awards. Her project was part of UEXCEL, a clinical recognition and advancement program for UCHealth nurses to develop leadership skills while continuing to practice at the bedside.



UCHealth Highlands Ranch Hospital **Nurse leader rounding for patient experience.**

UCHealth Highlands Ranch Hospital began welcoming patients in June 2019, opening to greater-than-anticipated demand.

In response to lower-than-desired patient satisfaction scores, hospital leaders focused on nurse leader rounding. Department leaders became more comfortable with patient rounding using a see-one, do-one, teach-one model. The nurse leader rounding teams visited more than 90% of admitted patients.

As nurse leader rounding began, the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores increased by about 20% across the inpatient teams. The overall rating of the facility is now over the 75th percentile.

The success with nurse leader rounding led to the start of multidisciplinary rounds at the patient bedside, with the goal of improving consistency between nurses and physicians. The amount of time to complete rounds has decreased by half, and patients enjoy being actively involved in their care.



UCHealth Memorial Hospital

A proactive approach to maternal safety.

A new approach to obstetric care at UCHealth Memorial Hospital assigns specialized nurses to actively follow patients identified as moderate- or high-risk.

High-Quality, Anticipatory, Watchful, Knowledgeable, Supportive (HAWKS) nurses provide education, support and advanced patient care by making rounds to assess and care for high-risk maternal care patients.

The HAWKS conduct drills for maternal and neonatal clinical processes and low-frequency, high-acuity situations. HAWKS provides clinical support to the bedside nurse for high-level assessments and multidisciplinary communication.

Since the program began in September 2019, HAWKS conducted monthly drills impacting an average of 258 staff members per month. They conducted more than 4,683 rounding events through April 2020.

HAWKS are a valued part of the perinatal team and play an integral role in code white events by coordinating various aspects of care. Our HAWKS save lives.



New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements

UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital **Supporting ED staff, providers after traumatic events.**

Emergency department staff frequently witness pain, suffering and tragedy. The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among emergency workers is three to six times that of the general public and can lead to compassion fatigue.

At UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, ED nurse Julia Lehmann led projects to improve workplace support for her ED colleagues. She worked with ED nurses and physicians to design and implement the “Please Pause–Realtime Debrief Tool” for ED staff after traumatic events. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete, and 78% of survey responses from participants said it was helpful; 87% said they would like more debriefings after traumatic events.



Lehmann’s abstract, “Addressing workplace violence in the emergency department,” was accepted for a podium presentation for the 2020 Rocky Mountain Interprofessional Research and Evidence-Based Practice Symposium and a poster presentation for the 2020 ANCC National Magnet Conference.

Her work also included a tool to improve understanding around workplace violence caused by patients or their family members. Such instances are severely under-reported. The tool, disseminated via presentations to leaders and educational emails to staff, helps to outline the process, expectations, laws and resources. It led to a 14% increase in staff feeling like there was a clear process to report an assault.

Lehmann, who also created the ED Vitality Committee and serves as its chair, is a true advocate and nursing leader. She was nominated for the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) National Magnet Nurse of the Year Award for 2020.

UCHealth Medical Center of the Rockies **Helping mechanically ventilated patients communicate.**

As care improvements led to intubated patients receiving less sedation at UCHealth Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland, these patients became more capable of communicating.

Attempting to communicate while intubated causes fear, anxiety and frustration. Traditional paper writing boards for communicating offer limited options. In June 2019, Ruthie Weyant, a cardiac ICU nurse, started using the VidaTalk app, which was installed on electronic tablets available to the patients.

The app is an interactive, multilingual tool for non-vocal and critically ill patients. It allows for sharing of phrases, combined with typing and drawing for easy, quick and efficient, customizable communication. During a pilot phase of this project, 63% of nurses used the app, and all who completed a survey said the tool was helpful.

Nurses in the cardiac intensive care unit continue using the tablets, and a research study led by Weyant is in progress. She said early results are positive, with patients who've been intubated indicating it helped them. The keyboard is the most popular function.

"You just want to do the best you can as a nurse taking care of mechanically ventilated patients," she said. "It is not the most pleasant experience, so if we can make it better, that is the goal."

Photo by Joel Blocker



UCHealth Virtual Health Center Remote monitoring innovations.

A pregnant patient with COVID-19, on her first night home from the hospital, received a call from a nurse at the UCHealth Virtual Health Center. The remote monitoring device she was wearing triggered concerns about her oxygen levels.

"I thought, 'Oh, my gosh, they really are monitoring me,'" said Erika Ibuado. "I felt secure, and it was nice to know that if something does go wrong, they are monitoring me. They are on top of it and (are) really keeping track of their patients. You are not just forgotten once you go home."

Ibuado was well enough to go home from the hospital. But there were concerns about her risk for declining health after discharge. As part of a pilot group of 10 patients with COVID-19, she received the FDA-approved device, which connected to her wrist and finger, to send an alert to nurses at the Virtual Health Center at signs of trouble.

Patients download an app to their smartphones, enabling them to transmit biometric data, including oxygen levels, respiratory rates and heart rates, to a cloud server. Providers at the Virtual Health Center monitor the data 24/7, taking steps to protect the patient if a problem like a drop in oxygen levels is detected.

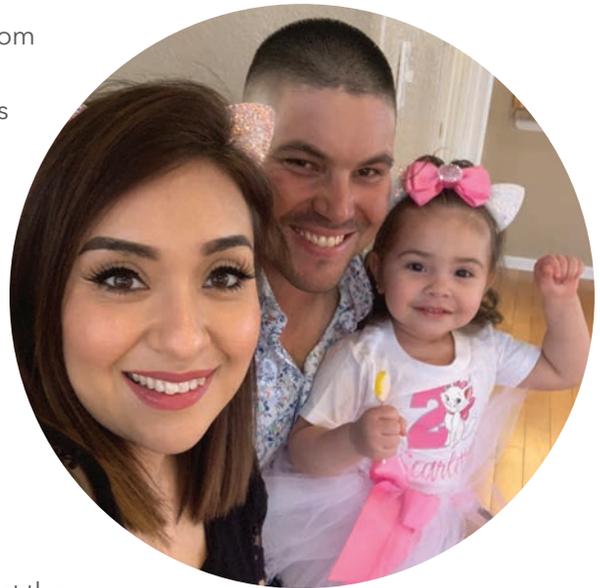
The pilot program was a step toward offering virtual monitoring to all patients with COVID-19 upon discharge from the hospital.

"We want to ensure that each patient has a safe transition and is watched carefully at home," said Amy Hassell, director of patient services for the Virtual Health Center. "Our goal is to provide interventions that keep patients out of the emergency department and urgent care settings and avoid hospitalizations."

"Our future likely also includes remotely monitoring patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes," Hassell said. "The results of the pilot project with patients like Ibuado offer early support for moving forward," she added.

"Virtual care is an exciting new frontier," Hassell said. "Patients [in the pilot] were supportive of the process. They were overwhelmingly grateful and liked the idea that the hospital is keeping an eye on them and that they could reach out if there was an issue."

The Virtual Health Center also provides an extra level of monitoring to patients admitted to UCHealth hospitals. In the past year, virtual sepsis acute-care monitoring expanded to all 12 hospitals, and the collaboration with bedside nurses has had a positive impact on patient care.



"We want to ensure that each patient has a safe transition and is watched carefully at home."

- Amy Hassell, director of patient services,
Virtual Health Center



UCHealth Broomfield Hospital **Preventing surgical-site infections.**

Nasal decolonization helps lower the chances of surgical-site infections (SSI) by removing potentially dangerous pathogens from the nose. Erin Brix, charge nurse of the pre- and post-operative department at Broomfield Hospital, identified an opportunity to improve the preoperative nasal decolonization swab process, as well as create potential cost savings.

After obtaining approval to assess the efficiency of the SSI bundle, she collaborated with UCHealth materials management and the value-analysis team. Brix and her preoperative team identified a new SSI swab product that would improve user compliance. She also influenced participation with her colleagues by simplifying the administration of the product with the patient.

The success of this analysis has led to strong support from the value-analysis team to convert to the new product. This project is now in the process of expanding as a system-wide conversion project. It is anticipated to result in savings of about \$100,000 across UCHealth.

For her work, Erin Brix was nominated in 2020 for the Colorado Nurses Foundation Nightingale Award.

Empirical Outcomes

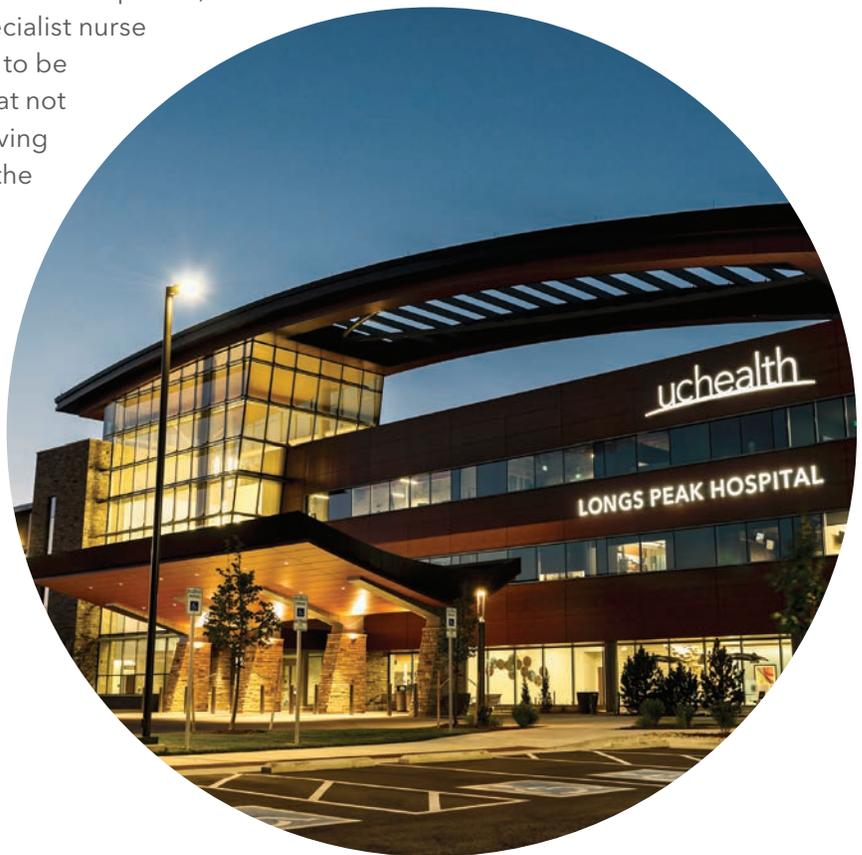
UCHealth Longs Peak Hospital **Enhanced Recovery After Surgery.**

Length of stay, infections and pain are all reduced through Enhanced Recovery After Surgery, a program offered by UCHealth Longs Peak Hospital.

ERAS is a multimodal care pathway designed through evidence-based practices to accelerate post-operative recovery. Longs Peak Hospital launched its first ERAS program in February 2018 for patients undergoing colorectal surgery. Initial results showed a significant reduction in the use of post-operative opioid use, with nearly half of these patients requiring no use of narcotics for pain control.

The program successfully expanded to include other surgeries such as hysterectomy and total joint replacement. For patients undergoing hysterectomy surgery, use of ERAS resulted in a 50% decrease in the average hospital stay.

“We track how well patients’ pain was managed after returning home and have found that most patients are comfortable with Tylenol and ibuprofen,” said Joanne Forster, a clinical quality specialist nurse at Longs Peak Hospital. “I am proud to be part of this interdisciplinary team that not only advocates and supports improving patient outcomes but understands the importance of collaboration across the entire care continuum.”



Preventing CAUTI, decreasing IUC use.

A UCHHealth-wide, multidisciplinary team formed in May 2019 is decreasing catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) and use of foley catheters through standardized care and improved data management.

In the CAUTI Clinical Effectiveness Group's first year, we have seen a 20% reduction in CAUTI from the previous year. Strategies included promoting early removal of indwelling urinary catheters (IUC), use of external catheters as an alternative when appropriate, clarifying urinary retention management, standardizing testing of urine and more. A CAUTI prevention online learning module was completed by more than 5,000 UCHHealth learners (for more information, see page 19).

The team also worked with urology specialists to create a bundle of interventions to address urinary retention; the interventions were placed in the IUC insertion and maintenance order to be used with all patients requiring an IUC.

Through data-management improvements, the team aimed to better track each hospital's infection rates, device days and individual unit data. This has given the CAUTI Clinical Effectiveness Group the ability to see how the changes are impacting system data.





Photo by Joel Blocker

UCHealth Poudre Valley Hospital **2019 National Magnet Nurse of the Year Award.**

Kristen Boettcher, ICU nurse at Poudre Valley Hospital, was honored with the 2019 National Magnet Nurse of the Year Award in the empirical outcomes category.

The prestigious award resulted from her work leading the development of a program to improve care for ICU patients withdrawing from alcohol. As a result, mortality rates and intubations decreased, and patients were able to transfer out of the ICU days earlier.

"Kristen exemplifies our vision of ensuring our nurses practice utilizing evidence and demonstrate impactful outcomes to our patients so they can live their extraordinary lives," UCHealth Chief Nursing Executive Kathy Howell said. "We are so proud that Kristen is a UCHealth Nurse."

Boettcher's innovative work, focused on critical-care patients experiencing alcohol withdrawal, was developed through research, collaboration and education. It improved patient care, created cost savings and is being expanded to additional hospitals and units.

"I'm just humbled," Boettcher said. "It's gratifying to see that the program is effective and is helping our patients."

In part through this evidence-based project, Boettcher was promoted to a Level IV nurse under UCHealth's UEXCEL Nursing Practice and Credentialing Model. She's the first nurse in the UCHealth Northern Colorado Region to receive that distinction, and one of only 21 Level IV nurses in the system, which includes about 7,800 registered nurses.

"Kristen's dedication to her patients and the professional practice of nursing is evident in the work she did to improve patients' lives," PVH Chief Nursing Officer Julie Nunley said. "This is one of the highest honors a nurse can receive during their career."

Nursing Excellence

UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital Fifth ANCC Magnet Designation.

In March 2020, UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital received a fifth designation as an American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet hospital. The Magnet designation provides patients with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of care they can expect to receive from an organization and is a testament to the positive practice environment for nurses.



"Being a Magnet hospital is not only about patient outcomes, it is also about having the support within our organization to make change, and to consistently innovate and improve the extraordinary care we provide our patients," UCHealth Chief Nursing Executive and UCH Chief Nursing Officer Kathy Howell said.

The Magnet Commission commended UCH for its robust support of nursing professional development. The UEXCEL program and the accredited Nurse Residency Program are two foundational structures that support and elevate nursing professional practice and contribute to exceeding the benchmarks for BSN and certification rates. The commission also noted nine exemplars for the organization, several of which were in the ambulatory practice setting for patient experience.

Magnet hospitals must apply for re-designation every four years, and UCH stands proudly among few to earn the prestigious recognition five consecutive times, which places UCH within the top 1% of organizations worldwide for nursing excellence.





UCHealth Nurse Residency Program **National CCNE accreditation.**

The UCHealth Nurse Residency Program received national accreditation in June 2020 from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

UCHealth hires hundreds of new graduate nurses each year who participate in the nurse residency program. Nurse residents develop into well-rounded professional nurses, and more than 70% of these nurses remain employed at UCHealth for years following program completion, supporting the much-needed nursing workforce at UCHealth.

The residency program started at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, and received CCNE accreditation in both 2009 and 2014. It was one of the first nationally accredited nurse residency programs in the United States.

As of 2015, Nurse Residency Programs in all three UCHealth regions have aligned and are structured according to the guidelines and recommendations provided by the Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Program™. The Nurse Residency Program leadership team spent several years preparing for a system-wide CCNE accreditation for all three regional programs. In fall 2019, UCHealth hosted a four-person, on-site evaluation team, whose conclusions led to the announcement in June 2020.



The employee-based Nurse Residency Program at UCHealth is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (ccneaccreditation.org).

FY 2020

Nursing Year in Review

Cover photo by Joel Blocker

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