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Northwestern Medicine
Academic Medical Center

Fiscal Year 2025
**Nursing
Annual Report**



A Message From the Wood-Prince Family Chief Nurse Executive



**U.S. News & World Report, 2025 – 2026.*

I am honored to share the Northwestern Medicine Academic Medical Center Nursing Annual Report for fiscal year 2025 (FY25).

Over the year, our nurses, care teams and leaders have united in a shared pursuit of Better — pushing boundaries, elevating care and reimagining what exceptional nursing can be.

Every day, our clinical nurses at Northwestern Medical Group and Northwestern Memorial Hospital bring our core values — Patients first, Integrity, Teamwork and Excellence — to every aspect of patient care. Your unwavering dedication has helped Northwestern Memorial Hospital to be ranked the No. 1 hospital in Illinois for 14 straight years, a testament to the remarkable spirit that defines our nursing community.*

Since earning our first Magnet® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center in 2006, we have continued to champion nursing excellence and gain national recognition as leaders in innovative care, quality outcomes and professional practice.

I am deeply grateful for our generous donors, friends and families, whose support empowers our nurses as they carry out this vital work.

Thank you for taking the time to explore this Nursing annual report, a reflection and celebration of the extraordinary care, innovation and leadership demonstrated across the Northwestern Medicine Academic Medical Center.

Sincerely,

Christopher McLarty, DNP, ACNP-BC
Vice President and Wood-Prince Family Chief Nurse
Executive
Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Northwestern
Medical Group



Transformational Leadership

Advocacy for Acquisition of Resources: 24/7 PCT Model

In response to feedback from nurses and patient care technicians (PCTs), Northwestern Memorial Hospital implemented a significant enhancement to its inpatient care model in July 2025 by expanding PCT coverage to 24 hours a day, for inpatient medical and surgical units. This transition included the introduction of 12-hour shifts on both days and nights. The initiative aimed to improve workflow efficiency, support caregiver well-being and strengthen the delivery of care that puts patients first. As part of this effort, 119 PCTs were hired in June 2025, marking a major investment in staffing and care quality across the Academic Medical Center. As a result, patients experienced more consistent support at the bedside, improved responsiveness to care needs, and enhanced overall care coordination across units.

New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements

Nurse Scholar Program

Evidence-based initiatives increase individual learning, enhancing patient outcomes while providing an empirical foundation for nursing. The vision of the Northwestern Medicine Academic Medical Center Nurse Scholar Program is to integrate evidence-based practice, translational research and traditional nursing research into the everyday world of professional nursing practice. The ability to articulate the science of nursing allows Northwestern Medicine nurses to deliver exceptional care based on clinical evidence.

Wound Ostomy Nurse Clinicians, Lydia Koepke, MS, APRN, RN-BS, WCON, and Christina Roembke, BSN, RN, CWON, applied and were accepted into Phase 2 of the Nurse Scholar Program to evaluate the use of Infrared Thermography (IRT) in the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU). IRT was used within 24 hours of admission to detect changes in sacral and heel tissue that may occur before visible skin breakdown is present. The project examined whether IRT could improve early identification of present-on-admission (POA) deep tissue injuries (DTIs) and enhance accuracy in differentiating POA versus hospital-acquired pressure injuries when compared with standard visual assessment. The outcome demonstrated that IRT supported earlier detection of potential POA DTIs compared with visual assessment alone, particularly in cases where tissue injury was not yet visibly apparent. Findings indicated the need for improved etiology identification using IRT yet requires enhanced clinician training and improved workflow integration to interpret IRT for accurate wound etiology assessment.

In FY25, three phases of the Nurse Scholar Program were created to better meet nurses' scholarly and professional development needs.



New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements

Northwestern Medicine Academic Medical Center
and Brinson Foundation Research Symposium

Every year the Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice Committee plans and hosts the Northwestern Medicine Academic Medical Center and Brinson Foundation Research Symposium. The theme for this year's symposium was "Innovation in Action: Harnessing Technology to Improve Workflow and Patient Outcomes."

Nurse scholars are invited to present their studies in the form of a poster or podium presentation or participate in the Nurse Scholar panel discussion.

Nurse Scholar Symposium Presentations

Improving visualization of the cervix during the pelvic exam and implications for the sexual assault medical forensic team

Jaime Psarras, BSN, RN, CEN, SANE-A
Sexual Assault Nurse Coordinator,
Emergency Department

Implementation of advanced life support for cardiac surgery patients in a large academic medical center

Sam Cohn, BSN, RN, CCRN, CSC
Education Coordinator, Cardiac Transplant ICU

Green is the new purple: A plan for Northwestern Memorial Hospital to execute environmental sustainability in medicine departments

Erika Wright, BSN, RN, CMSRN
Clinical Coordinator, 15E Medicine

Mental illness in U.S. coal miners: A collaborative approach to understand risk factors and prevalence

Linda Muszynski, BSN, RN, AE-C, COHN
Nurse Clinician, Canning Thoracic Institute

Structural Empowerment

Finding Your Branch

As part of the Academic Medical Center organizational shared leadership structure, the Nursing Professional Development Committee (NPDC) launched a nursing networking series titled “Finding Your Branch.” This initiative was designed to highlight unique and non-traditional nursing roles within Northwestern Medicine and to increase awareness of career growth pathways across clinical settings using the Nursing Career Tree. The Career Tree offers a snapshot of professional development opportunities available at Northwestern Medicine. Each branch includes specific roles that support the advancement of knowledge and skills. In FY25, the NPDC hosted four sessions focused on the following topics: Professionalism, Master’s Degree Pathways, Advanced Education, and the LEAD Program.



Improved nursing recruitment and retention:

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

3.2%
reduction in vacancy rate

2.4%
reduction in turnover

Northwestern Medical Group

0.3%
reduction in vacancy rate

2.1%
reduction in turnover

Structural Empowerment

Advocacy Day in Springfield

In April 2025, the Nursing Healthcare Policy Subcommittee hosted its annual Advocacy Day in Springfield, providing nurses from Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Academic Medical Center the opportunity to engage with state legislators. Participants met at the Illinois State Capitol for scheduled legislative visits, guided tours and committee hearing attendance.

Advocacy focused on three priorities:

- › Protecting healthcare staff: Supporting legislation to explore enhanced safety measures for healthcare workers facing increasing rates of physical, verbal and emotional abuse.
- › Opposing mandatory staffing ratios: Continued opposition to “one-size-fits-all” staffing ratios that fail to reflect patient complexity, unit differences and hospital needs.
- › Addressing workforce shortages: Support for Illinois joining the national Nurse Licensure Compact to allow for multistate practice and to streamline licensure processing.



Advocacy Day in Springfield

Meriam R. Evans MSN, RN, CMSRN, Nicole Hinds, BSN, RN, CMSRN, Erika Donovan MSN, RN, CGRN, CNL, Kaylah Savage MSN, RN, CNRN, CNL, Elizabeth Centanni, MSN, RNC, Joan Pasquesi, BSN, RN, CCRP-RSRCH



Empirical Outcomes

Fiscal year 2025 nursing accomplishments



Northwestern Memorial Hospital achieved their fifth Magnet designation in 2025. Considered the gold standard for nursing excellence, Magnet recognition highlights the hospital's dedication to nursing excellence, top-tier patient care and innovative practices.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital received eight exemplars. Exemplars are a unique recognition for areas where an organization excels compared with its peers.

- › Percent of nurses certified
- › Percent of nurses who have their BSN
- › Clinical nurses' use of Shared Decision-Making, specifically highlighting the LEAD and Nurse Scholar Programs
- › Strong performance in ambulatory nurse sensitive indicators
- › In ambulatory areas, patient experience exemplars in careful listening, courtesy and respect, and pain
- › Innovation involving nursing



The Northwestern Memorial Hospital Emergency Department received the Emergency Nurses Association Lantern Award, which honors departments that demonstrate exceptional performance in leadership, practice, education, advocacy and research. This achievement reflects the power of collaboration, clinical excellence and a shared commitment to improving patient outcomes.



Northwestern Memorial Hospital's continued rise in Vizient's Quality and Patient Safety rankings — from 14th in 2023, to 10th in 2024, and now No. 2 out of 118 academic medical centers in 2025 — is a direct reflection of a commitment to excellence.

The Academic Medical Center achieved top quality and safety recognitions:



5-Star Rating
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



Grade A Rating
Leapfrog Hospital Safety



No. 1
Hospital in Illinois and U.S. News & World Report Honor Roll Status

In FY25, the Academic Medical Center showed improvement in clinical quality indicators:

24%

Reduction in catheter-associated urinary tract infections

18%

Reduction in central line-associated bloodstream infections

45%

Reduction in stage 3, 4 or unstageable pressure injuries

In FY25, ambulatory nurses outperformed national benchmarks in the majority of quarters for the following quality metrics:



Stroke 4 thrombolytic therapy in the Emergency Department



Inactive status due to incomplete workup in Liver Transplant



Medication prescribed at discharge in the Cardiac Cath Lab

Exemplary Professional Practice

LEAD Program

Lead, Excel and Develop (LEAD) is Northwestern Medicine’s systemwide clinical advancement program to support professional growth across disciplines. By fostering innovation, research and quality improvement, LEAD empowers clinicians to elevate care delivery and improve patient outcomes.

FY25 LEAD by the numbers	Northwestern Memorial Hospital	Northwestern Medical Group
Projects	33	10
Clinical nurse participants	83	26

Northwestern Memorial Hospital LEAD Project	Northwestern Medical Group LEAD Project
<p>Orders needed to manage acute urinary retention are not centralized, and staff members were unable to identify criteria for management. As part of LEAD, Maddie Dineen, RN, identified a gap and designed and implemented a urinary retention order set that pulls directly from the policy.</p> <p>Now standardized, orders are centralized to manage acute urinary retention, guide best practice and decrease the incidence of catheter associated urinary tract infections on the pilot units, NSICU, 10E and 10W. The order set used an existing order set to reflect current policy and accounted for clinician feedback. Education was completed with clinicians on the pilot units. Policy awareness and order set usage were tracked throughout the course of the project.</p> <p>As a result, pilot units experienced a decrease in CAUTI incidence, reflecting more consistent acute urinary retention management. Based on these outcomes, the order set is being considered across the organization, as a result of LEAD.</p>	<p>Patients who are awaiting approval for transplant must undergo a medical and psychosocial evaluation to ensure that surgical benefits outweigh the risks. Nephrology clinic nurses Nicki Horwitz, RN, Elizabeth Centanni, RN, and Allison Webster, RN, saw an opportunity to reduce the time required to complete kidney transplant evaluations. Participating in LEAD, they developed and implemented a standardized protocol for kidney transplant evaluation testing before Transplant Orientation and Education Day (TOED).</p> <p>After they analyzed historical data from patients who completed transplant evaluations, they designed a nephrology transplant protocol. Using electronic medical records, they identified current nephrology patients who may qualify for transplant based on lab results and medical history. Data is reviewed monthly. When a patient meets protocol criteria, their nephrologist is notified by a nurse. If approved by the physician, the nurse initiates the protocol.</p> <p>Standardizing pre-TOED testing and routing scheduling requests directly to the transplant team have significantly reduced referral wait times and expedited transplant approvals. This improvement because of LEAD enables earlier activation on the waitlist and better preparedness for living donor surgery.</p>

These initiatives are reflective of the many projects led by nursing teams across the Academic Medical Center.

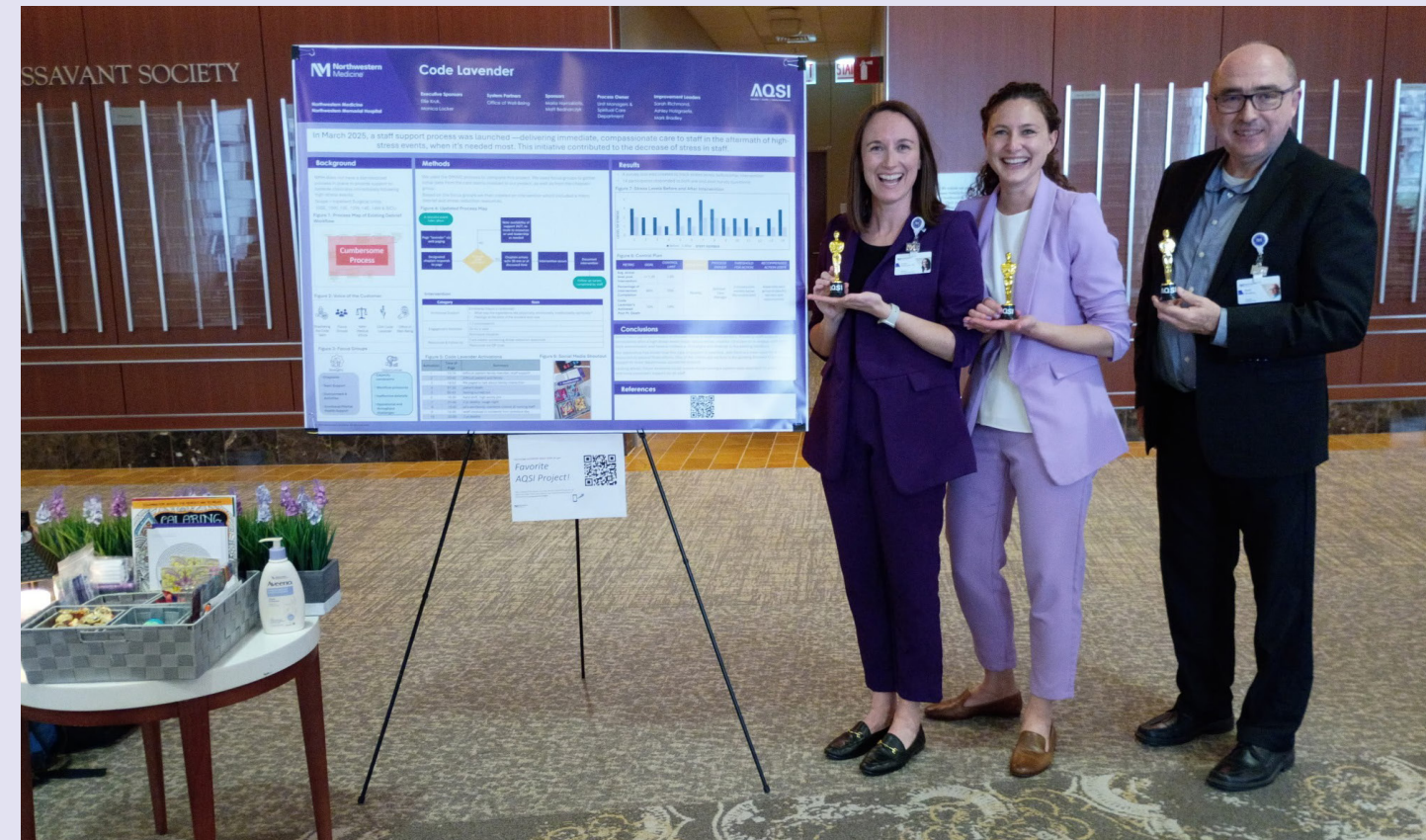
Exemplary Professional Practice

AQSI Program Participants
Create Code Lavender

The Academy for Quality and Safety Improvement (AQSI) is a professional development program with the overarching goal to develop future leaders by equipping them with the skills and tools necessary to lead meaningful change.

During the seven-month program, interdisciplinary team members complete a quality improvement project that directly affects their practice, colleagues and patients. Ashley Holzgraefe, MSN, RN, CNL, NEA-BC, Sarah Richmond, MBA, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, and Mark Bradley, BCC, DMin, completed the program in FY25 with their project, “Code Lavender.”

Code Lavender is a response that offers timely emotional support for individuals and teams after high-stress events. Its purpose is to reduce distress, restore team cohesion and provide resources for coping and stabilization. To initiate the response, any staff member can page “lavender,” and a designated chaplain will respond on the unit to provide resources, emotional support or engagement activities.



Ashley Holzgraefe, MSN, RN, CNL, NEA-BC, Sarah Richmond, MBA, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, and Mark Bradley, BCC, DMin

2025 Nursing Excellence Award Winners

The Nursing Excellence Awards Program is an opportunity for nurses to be recognized for their outstanding contributions to nursing practice at the Academic Medical Center. One registered nurse is selected from each clinical area through a peer review process that includes input from members of the interprofessional team.

Collaborative

Patient Advocate

Knowledgeable

Professional

Compassionate



Allison Webster, BSN, RN, CMSRN, Nephrology Clinic; Erin Higgins, BSN, RN, OCN, Inpatient Oncology Nursing; Faith May, BSN, RN, CEN, Emergency/Trauma Department; Kendall Giacalone, BSN, RN, CMSRN, Inpatient Surgical Nursing; Jessica Velazquez, BSN, RN, PCCN, Inpatient Cardiac Nursing; Raymond Lezon, BSN, RN, Neuro-oncology; Elizabeth Griffith, BSN, RN, CCRN, CMC, CSC, Float Pool Nursing; Grace Mampe, BSN, RN, Outpatient Cardiology; Samantha Kreps, MSN, RN, PMH-BC, Stone Institute of Psychiatry; Karina Gonzalez, BSN, RN, CNRN, Neuro/Ortho Nursing; Alissa Cowan, BSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, Women's Health; Amanda Paull, BSN, RN, CV-BC, Medicine Nursing; Alex Goodall, BSN, RN, CNOR, Surgical Services; Olivia Crawford, MSN, RN, OCN, Ambulatory, Outpatient and Procedural Care Nursing