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Neuro Nurses Have All the Brains! Elevating PCU Nurses through Interdisciplinary Collaboration with ICU Counterparts & Neuro Leaders to Promote Continuity of Care for Stroke Patients

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# Neuro Nurses Have All the Brains!

Elevating PCU Nurses through Interdisciplinary Collaboration with ICU Counterparts & Neuro Leaders to Promote Continuity of Care for Stroke Patients

By: Dawn Carroll BSN, RN, MS, Abigail Edilloran BSN, RN, CHPN, Christine Wood BS, BSN, RN

There is no other unit like the 5H Neuro Progressive Care Unit (PCU). Established in 2016 with the opening of Jacobs Medical Center, the 12-bed 5H Neuro PCU was essentially a grassroots project. 5H started with five UC San Diego (UCSD) nurses transferring internally to build the unit, along with, approximately, 18 external new hires from various organizations throughout San Diego county and the nation, who brought their expertise from other hospitals and their fresh new perspectives with them. Designed and built from the ground up by frontline staff, 5H was the creation of a group of pioneering nurses who utilized their voices and transformational vision to establish UCSD's first dedicated stroke unit. Furthermore, 5H helped pave the way for UCSD's esteemed accomplishment of earning The Joint Commission's Comprehensive (TJC) Stroke Designation at the only health system in the country serving two separate sites (La Jolla and Hillcrest).

5H's neuro nurses engage in rigorous training in order to refine their specialized skill sets, as the medical management of stroke patients relies on the astute assessment skills care providers. Taught by our Stroke Clinical Nurse Specialist, Patricia Graham MS RN CCRN SCRNP, and our Neurocritical Care Medical Director, Dr. Navaz Karanjia, each neuro nurse participates in a series of neuro-specific classes (Neuro A, Neuro B, Neuro Bootcamp, Neuropharmacology, Neuro Skills, and more) as a part of their onboarding and annual training. In this rigorous neuro program, our neuro nurses are trained to be experts in stroke care, equipped with the attentive assessment skills needed to identify the subtlest stroke symptoms and to understand the area of the brain affected. Subsequently, the nurses are empowered through their knowledge to advocate for their patients when changes in the treatment plan are indicated. As



**Dawn Carroll, BSN, RN, MS**

joined UC San Diego Health in 2014 as 10th floor ICU nurse manager. Currently, she is nurse manager of 3F/5H at JMC since opening in 2016. She received her BS/MS from SUNY at Stony Brook and worked as Senior Nurse Practitioner in Perinatal Women's Health. Dawn brings with her over 15 years of nursing leadership roles in Neuro-Surgical Intensive Care, Cardiovascular and Cardiothoracic Services. Prior to UC San Diego, she served as Director of Neuro/Surgical Intensive Care unit and Director of Trauma/Step Down at Regional Medical Center in Hudson Florida from 2008 to 2013. She was crucial in the development of HCA's first Trauma Center, where her team was recognized, based on her nomination, in Advance for Nurses for adaptability. Her nomination letter was featured in the May 2013 issue of Advance for Nurses. Dawn also served as nurse manager of the ICUs and Rapid Response teams at Palomar. Dawn is an active member of ACNL, ANA, AONE and serves on the Rewards and Recognition committee for ACNL. She plans on pursuing her DNP in the fall of 2019.



**Abby Edilloran, BSN, RN, CHPN**

is an Assistant Nurse Manager for the Jacobs Medical Center 3F & 5H Neuro ICU/PCU team. Abby has been a Registered Nurse for 7 years. As a second degree bachelor's prepared nurse who entered the healthcare profession as a new graduate in the intensive care unit, Abby has witnessed firsthand the complexities of patient care, sparking her determination to not only serve her patients with the best clinical skills possible, but also be their voice and advocate for what they need (and what nurses need) to optimize nursing care and healthcare delivery. Because of this, she has developed a passion for quality improvement and patient and family centered care. She has earned her nursing degree from Azusa Pacific University and holds professional certifications in stroke nursing (Stroke Certified Registered Nurse) and in palliative care (Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse).



**Christine Wood, BS, BSN, RN**

graduated with her BSN from National University in 2014. She is an active, participating member of the Quality Council, Medication Safety Committee, and Stroke Quality Council Meeting. She has diligently devoted herself to creating an atmosphere of open and honest communication between physicians and staff. Being able to care for patients in their darkest hours after a stroke is something that she is very passionate about. The opportunity to be a stroke nurse has truly been a calling and her dream come true.

active participants in their patient's care, 5H nurses spend a day rounding with the neurocritical care team, review various MRI/CT scans during radiology rounds, and have the opportunity shadow during the most complex of neuro cases in the operating room.

5H neuro nurses are transformational, even beyond the bedside. As masters of their own craft, 5H neuro nurses often teach their peers across the organization about stroke care and nursing management. Many of 5H's nurses have taught at annual Neuro Skills days, participated in Mock Stroke Codes with the interdisciplinary neuro team, and led educational presentations to prepare nurses and leaders for regulatory visits for our stroke survey. 5H neuro nurses are a valuable asset to the stroke program at UCSDH, as they play a role in their patients' hyper-acute care up until discharge planning and rehab. As a sister unit to their ICU counterpart, the 3F Neuro ICU at Jacobs Medical Center, 5H is often called upon to provide expertise in nursing across the continuum.

It is not only because of its highly specialized knowledge regarding stroke care that the 5H staff shines in many of the nursing sensitive indicators, but it is also because of the compassion, teamwork, and culture of caring that it demonstrates





every day. The unit has not had a single incidence of CAUTI or CLABSI in over a year, and the nurses demonstrate a commitment to nursing excellence through tackling nursing sensitive indicators routinely. Additionally, every day on the unit, nurses find reason for celebration, whether it be a patient's birthday while they are hospitalized, a patient's recovery from even the most devastating stroke deficits, or the simple fact that a patient mastered even the most basic tasks for the first time. 5H is a strong proponent of patient-and-family centered care, with multiple on-going projects designed to bring focus back to the patient. Heather Abraham RN is working to promote personal pet visitation, Bryan Klimek RN has committed to aspiration prevention, Kristy Ames RN is passionately working to reduce shoulder subluxation, and Bree Buckshnis RN is partnering with our neuro providers to refine interdisciplinary communication across the stroke care continuum. Furthermore, 5H nurses volunteer at stroke centers in San Diego county, sharing their passion for community and wellness beyond the walls of Jacobs Medical Center.

5H nurses elevate their practice through their partnership with the Neuro ICU, nursing leadership, and stroke leadership. Daily huddles with the Neuro ICU identify potential

downgrades and ICU transfers to facilitate seamless throughput and patient flow within the stroke/neuro service line. Interdisciplinary rounds with stroke leadership, as well as active participation in Stroke Quality Council, have also proven to be valuable in the empowerment and quality of care that 5H neuro nurses deliver. 5H is a driving force in what stroke care looks like at UCSDH.

The successes of this team are not only due to the relentless spirit of the compassionate group of individuals who are proud to be a part of the 5H team; they can also be attributed to the various team building activities



that are conducted to maintain engagement and a healthy work environment. Annually, our neuro family (including both ICU/PCU nurses and all neuro providers) participates in team building retreats to maintain personal wellness, an award ceremony (3F/5H Axon Awards) during which we roll out the red carpet for our team members, and weekly debriefs to address process issues and provide an emotional 'check-in' with one another. Needless to say, the morale of our team is very important, and it is our priority to keep caregiver burnout at bay!

Stroke nursing is all-encompassing in its approach to patient care; it requires patience, a specialized knowledge and skill set, and strong collaboration with the interdisciplinary team. The 5H Neuro PCU staff is proud to lead in this growing field and has big plans to shape the future of stroke nursing. After all, 'neuro nurses have all the brains', and 5H strives to be the premier destination for stroke care at UCSDH.

## Teamwork, Retention, and Staff Morale, 3B Small but Mighty

By: Megan Hagedorn BSN, RN, PCCN and Kathleen Boughanem BSN, RN

The University of California San Diego Medical Center consists of three hospitals that operate under one license with a current combined capacity of 808 beds: UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest (390 beds), Jacobs Medical Center (JMC) (364 beds) and Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center (CVC) (54 beds). This is then divided out into 26 individual nursing units ranging in bed size from JMC 4th and 6th floors, which are the largest at 36 beds each, to our 15 bed unit located in the CVC. When the CVC opened in 2011, the nurses and clinical care partners (CCP's) from Hillcrest moved into this new building that houses 3 units dedicated strictly to cardiac care. The nurses that opened the new building left the units they knew by heart to start a new type of unit in a new facility, and 3B was born.

When first opened, 3B was primarily a unit that served a patient population of patients receiving observation or procedures with overnight stays. The short length of stay resulted in a place that was fast paced with a high patient turnover. Most of the patient population stayed less than 24 hours post cardiac catheterization. Most units can claim fantastic teamwork but when you are admitting and discharging over two-thirds of your unit in a day, great teamwork isn't just helpful, it's necessary. Because patients are always coming and going, establishing a rapport with patients is sometimes difficult. On 3B the nurses have developed an expertise in this facet of care, or maybe they are so successful because of their natural abilities for relationship-building. To these nurses patients aren't a number, but instead they are treated as family. The phrase 'not my patient' is just not uttered here, just the opposite,

it's considered taboo. They say there is no 'I' in team and here on 3B that statement rings true.

Through the years the patient population has changed. There are less one night stays and more chronic congestive heart failure and post heart surgery patients, but the esprit de corps remains the same. One might say that the teamwork on this unit was born of necessity. While there may be some truth to that, the teamwork here has remained because of the highly skilled and dedicated nurses that call this floor home.

The other things that you will notice if you are ever on 3B is that there always seems to be food. We all know that nurses like to eat! Goodies from families and special treats from management help make us feel appreciated. True to form 3B makes that extra effort. The staff here are always bringing in dishes to share. Cookies, candy, and cuisine from any corner of the globe are always filling the breakroom. If there is one thing that can boost staff morale while running around discharging and admitting patients, it is snacks. So, if you're hungry swing by and grab a bite, it's guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

Fifteen; that number is not only significant because of the number of beds on this unit, it is also the average years of nursing expertise on the unit amongst the staff. With one of the lowest staff turnover rates in the hospital it's no wonder it's hard to find an open position on 3B.

When the staff were asked why they stay on this unit the common denominator is family. Everyone here is treated like family, patients and staff alike. In retrospect maybe that is why the food is so good here, food tastes better when you eat it with your family.

**Megan Hagedorn, BSN, RN, PCCN** is the Assistant Nurse Manager of the 3B Progressive Care Unit at UC San Diego Health Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center. She earned her BSN from University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Prior to working at UCSD, she started at Mission Hospitals in Asheville, NC. From there, she took on several travel assignments in Washington DC and Maui, Hawaii before finding a home here in San Diego.

**Kate Boughanem, BSN, RN** graduated from St. Louis University in 1996 with her Bachelor's in Nursing. She started her career at UC San Diego Health 17 years ago as a travel nurse at Thornton ICU. She worked as a cardiovascular and heart transplant nurse before becoming nurse manager of Sulpizio 3B.



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