

July 30, 2024

To the PCICS Bedside Nursing Excellence Award Committee,

It is my sincere honor and pleasure to write this letter of recommendation in support of a very special bedside nurse for the 2024 PCICS Bedside Nursing Excellence Award. As the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), I have had the distinct honor of working closely with this nurse for 18 years. Over my 30-year career I can honestly state this nurse exceeds all others in her clinical expertise, advocacy, sense of responsibility and overall contribution. As a strong asset to our program and to the specialty of pediatric critical care nursing I am certain she fully meets the criteria for this award.

With regards to clinical practice, this nurse is exceptional and without a doubt, one of the strongest clinical leaders in the CICU. She has superior assessment skills, recognizes problems early, manages all clinical challenges and communicates effectively with the team. She is fully independent in her assessment and quickly applies theoretical and classroom studies to the bedside. She cares for the most critically ill patients while contributing significantly to the care of chronic patients equally. She is an expert clinician in the care of patients with 1) heart failure who require ventricular assist devices (VADs) waiting for cardiac transplantation, 2) patients who require extracorporeal life support (ECLS), 3) immediate postoperative high acuity patients with severe low cardiac output, 4) patients with advanced pulmonary hypertension who require intravenous or subcutaneous prostacyclin therapy, and 5) postoperative cardiac transplant. In addition, she is an expert caring for patients of all ages with congenital heart disease including preterm infants (as young as 28 weeks gestation) through adults (50-60 years of age). She is extremely hard working and feels a strong sense of responsibility to the CICU team, patients and families. When she is not consumed with patient care she is reviewing the patient's chart, talking to families, working on clinical projects, seeking learning opportunities, or mentoring her peers.

This nurse is an outstanding and universally accepted leader in the CICU. She is an established night shift nurse functioning in the bedside, charge, resource, precepting, and mentoring roles. As a bedside nurse, she is the person you want for the sickest patient. As a charge nurse, she is the person you want when the unit is high acuity, short staffed with limited skill mix. Attending physicians and surgeons are relieved when she is working knowing whatever happens, the care will be excellent. As a bedside nurse she can anticipate problems before they occur and co-facilitate all emergency situations. While working, she identifies opportunities for improvement and reports to nursing leadership while offering to assist with the necessary improvement projects.

In the CICU this nurse is actively engaged in the Night Shift Council, Recruitment and Recognition Council, and the Clinical Practice Council. She has been a CLABSI Prevention Champion for over 5 years. During this role, our CLABSI rate has decreased in the past year from 1.02 to 0.65 which is exceptional for our unit. When working, she is assisting with CLABSI prevention strategies and teaching new nurses about the work. She also participates on the Wound Complication Committee. During this time, in part due to her assistance, our wound complication rate (including SSI and all other wound complications) has decreased from 7.9 to 5.4 (wound complications/100 surgeries). Wound care and SSI prevention is another focus for her bedside-to-bedside education while working. She was largely responsible for improving our night shift preoperative bathing compliance from 24% to 100% sustained for 4 months. She was the CICU Patient Safety Coach for two years. In this role she collaborated with all the Patient

Safety Coaches within the hospital while representing and identifying safety situations in the CICU. One specific patient safety project she initiated was related to patient's identification bands (ID bands). ID bands were being placed on bedside computers instead of the patients for easy scanning accessibility by the RNs. She orchestrated the purchase of this new product (Easy ID Band) within the hospital, developed a hospital wide nursing procedure, and implemented both the product and the new practice. As a result, there was a decrease of computer placed ID bands from 95% to 5% in the CICU; an improvement that significantly reduces the potential error of incorrect patient identification.

Skilled communication is a strength for this nurse and with this comes a commitment to nurse and patient advocacy. She does not hesitate to use her bold voice during times when her assessment varies from others. When nurse's voice is not heard by the multidisciplinary team, she will escalate to the appropriate individuals requesting assistance and resolution. She orchestrates bedside huddles when there are varying opinions on patient care and there is a need for effective communication to optimize patient outcomes. She remains calm, professional and articulate; everyone listens when she speaks.

This nurse has been a key force in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within our hospital. Her multilingual skills in Arabic and French enable her to bridge language barriers, ensuring clear communication with a diverse patient population. She empowers patients and families by providing vital education on congenital heart disease, surgical procedures, and daily care goals. Her advocacy ensures that patients' rights and preferences are respected and integrated into their care plans. By combining her multilingual abilities with a strong commitment to patient advocacy, she significantly enhances individual patient experiences and fosters a culture of respect and equity within the hospital.

As a result of her clinical expertise, nursing leadership, strong communication, outcome-based improvement work and advocacy for DEI, this nurse has received several local awards. These include, 1) multiple Caring Tree Awards, awards nominated by families, given to staff members who demonstrate a commitment to family-centered care; 2) Employee of the Month Award; and 3) The Sheila Mann Excellence in Cardiovascular Nursing Award, one of the most prestigious awards in this hospital. Receiving the PCICS Bedside Nursing Excellence Award would be her first national recognition.

In summary, I very strongly believe this nurse is deserving of the PCICS award. In the past 18 years she has made a significant contribution to the care of patients and families in the PCICU and to the clinical and professional development of our nursing team. Countless nurses have been mentored by her and many lives have been positively impacted by her bedside contribution. Please consider her application and contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Lori D. Fineman, RN, MS

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