

When this award was announced I immediately thought of Suzette Riddick. There is no one who deserves the inaugural PCICS bedside nursing award more. She not only excels but is a prime example and role model in every quality that was listed, teamwork, clinical judgement, advocacy for patients and families, innovative solutions and mentorship. Suzette has been a bedside nurse for 33 years and 18 of those years she has been a bedside nurse in the cardiac intensive care unit at Children's Hospital Colorado. The number of physicians and nurses she has mentored over the last 18 years is too many to count. The number of patients she has helped and families she has provided comfort to make her a true hero. I can say without a doubt that Suzette is one of the best nurses I have every had the pleasure of working with. As an attending, when I walk into the unit in the morning and see that Suzette is working there is an instant feeling of relief and peace as I know that the sickest patient in the unit is in exceptionally capable hands. Not only does Suzette shine in all above listed qualities but you can tell she loves being a bedside nurse.

Teamwork:

It is amazing that after 18 years in the same, very stressful, environment, she comes to work every day with a great attitude and smile on her face. No matter how sick the patient is that she is caring for or how crazy the unit is when she is charge nurse, she stays positive, focused, and never complains. If a patient that is not hers is decompensating on the unit, she is always there to help with the resuscitation and often provide pearls of wisdom that change the trajectory for the patient. She also has an amazing ability to rally the team and make everyone's day better with her sense of humor. It is not uncommon, when there is some downtime, to see a group of team members of all disciplines gathered around Suzette because she is just one of those individuals that lifts your spirit.

Clinical Judgement:

Suzette is one of the brightest nurses I have every worked with. I think 99% of the time she does not even need a physician to help guide care as she knows exactly what the patient needs and understand exactly what is going on with the patient. Despite this, she is incredibly humble and always a respectful team player. We have nurse led rounding in our unit and I have personally experienced multiple times when Suzette suggest something I was not thinking of and this suggestion helps to excel the patient progress or helps to identify why the patient was not progressing. I have also had multiple experience with Suzette where her experience and clinical knowledge has either helped to prevent an acute decompensation or the reason a patient was successfully resuscitated. I can think of a specific example when I was a new attending. I truly feel that if Suzette was not the beside nurse with me that day this patient would have ended up not surviving or at the very least on ECMO. The unit was busy, the acuity was high and it was one of those days when the clinical experience was fresh. We had traveling respiratory therapist who did not have a lot of knowledge of CHD and in retrospect I described the day as not only one where I felt as if I had little help but one in which I kept getting banana peels thrown under my feet. We had a failing single ventricle who was very ill. In addition, she had a respiratory illness, required high vent support and was having multiple episodes of mucous plugging and desaturations. The respiratory therapist, that was traveling, was unfamiliar with our unit and was struggling with the acuity. The patient was peri arrest with

complete collapse of the right lung and the RT was paralyzed by the situation. Suzette stepped up and not only performed the role of the bedside nurse but the respiratory therapist until we could get the charge RT to our unit to help. In collaboration we start aggressive bag suctioning, airway clearance and chest physiotherapy and eventually mobilized the mucous plug and prevented the patient from having a cardiac arrest. When our team was struggling, Suzette stepped up, took control, used her extensive bedside experience, and prevented a cardiac arrest. This is just one example of the countless time Suzette clinical judgment has made a huge difference for our patients.

Advocacy for patients and families

This is an area where Suzette shines. As you will see in the narratives from two of our congenital heart disease families, Suzette has an unparalleled way of connecting with families and advocating for her patients in a kind and humble way.

Innovative Solutions:

There is no one in our unit who can figure out how to safely progress her patients better than Suzette. I can think of one example of a patient who was incredibly delirious. The patient was intubated and in the vicious cycle of receiving increased amounts of sedation to “keep her safe” which was not only not helping but was contributing to worsening delirium until Suzette became her nurse. In addition to all her amazing skills at calming patients without opioids and benzos, she essentially created a weighted blanket that was used to not only keep the patient safe but calmed the patient. She was able to avoid giving the patient any sedation medication and by the end of her shift broke a 2-day vicious cycle of delirium. The patient was able to wean to extubation by the next day.

Mentorship:

Suzette is an exceptional mentor. As you will see from the nominations of our nursing leaders below, she is one of the best nursing mentors we have. She loves to mentor, and her mentees go on to become fantastic bedside nurses. Suzette also has the ability to mentor new attendings, I personally experienced this when I was a new attending, fellows and advanced practice providers. As the program director of our cardiology fellowship, I am so grateful that our fellows get the honor of learning from Suzette. Though her cardiac and especially cardiac intensive care knowledge supersedes that of our new fellows she skillfully teaches them in a way that makes them feel included and respected. While she knows what the answer is she will reach out to the fellow, as they are the first call, and explains or teaches them what she thinks is going on and what she believes the patient needs. It is awe-inspiring to watch someone with her experience and clinical knowledge, year after year, treat our physicians in training with respect, gently guide them to the correct management decision and humbly navigate the situation when it needs to be escalated above them.

There is no way in one letter I could ever put into words how much Suzette Riddick deserves this award or explain the impact she had made, and continues to make, on the lives of her patients, patient families and colleagues. As one of my colleagues stated, “It is difficult to quantify her impact, you just need to experience it to fully understand”. We probably could

write an entire book on why Suzette desires this award but for the sake of the selection committee have limited our nominations. Below are the direct words from physician leaders, nurse leaders, cardiothoracic surgeons, advance practice providers and patient families from Children's Hospital of Colorado describing why they whole heartedly believe Suzette deserves the PCICS bedside nursing award.

Sincerely,

Carly Scahill, DO, MSCR

Cardiac Intensivist and Fellowship Director for Cardiology and Cardiac Critical Care

Suzette is a premier level nurse in our CICU. She has worked in the unit for over 15 years. She provides excellent care to the most complex of patients, including those on ECMO. She has a wonderful bedside manner and is a role model for younger nurses. Many younger nurses seek her clinical opinion and hope to train under her. The number of families that have praised our team due to Suzette's clinical and humanistic approach is innumerable.

Dr. Dunbar Ivy

Chief of Pediatric Cardiology

Suzette deserves the PCICS Bedside Nursing Award as she has been a truly outstanding and under recognized cardiac critical care nurse for over 15 years. She is simply the best bedside nurse I have worked with during my time at Children's Hospital Colorado CICU and has served as a mentor to countless nurses, fellows and APP's in that time. Any accolades do not do her influence and commitment justice. She's the best and has been the best.

Dr. Jonathon Kaufman

Medical Director of the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit and Cardiac Progressive Care Unit

Suzette has been a leader in the CICU from the time she started here. She has great bedside manner, has a wonderful fund of knowledge, makes the families feel trusting in the care that is given, is an outstanding teacher to the younger, less experienced nurses, is always positive and smiling, and relates well to all who work with her. Often a charge nurse, cool under fire, extremely helpful!

Dr. David Campbell

Cardiothoracic Surgeon

I would like to nominate Suzette Riddick for the PCICS bedside nursing award of excellence. Suzette has worked in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) at Children's Hospital of Colorado (CHCO) for the last 18 years. During her time in the CICU she has precepted countless new nurses and positively impacted hundreds of patients and families.

It is difficult to quantify the scope of impact Suzette has on not only patients and families but her nursing peers and the multidisciplinary team. She is a clinically skilled nurse who is passionate about providing the highest quality of care to her patients. She has the ability to progress patients, unlike anyone else in the unit and her work ethic is simply unmatched. Her

patients are always in pristine condition, clean, organized, and excess equipment removed thanks to her advocacy. She habitually sets the next nurses up for success and provides a clear outline of the plan of care and how to achieve these goals.

As a preceptor, Suzette trains her orientees to critically think, ask questions and truly understand the pathophysiology of the patient. Any nurse that is mentored by Suzette, becomes successful as she pours her clinical expertise and emotional support into the peer that is eager to learn. Not only does she coach bedside nurses, but the new fellows and RT regularly lean on Suzette for her opinion and expertise. Her collaboration with providers is respectful and courteous, and when combined with her skill and knowledge, she has earned the trust of those around her. She recognizes patients in distress and intervenes early to prevent an emergency situation. Should an emergency arise she is the nurse you want by your side. Suzette holds her composure, organizes, and delegates tasks and roles to the team at the bedside, helps to recap what has been done and anticipates the next steps.

Suzette maintains a humble expertise as she continues to ask questions and seeks to understand the increasingly complex patients in the CICU. She regularly attends monthly lectures on specific heart defects and listens to the "PediHeart podcast" which discusses new research studies for patients with congenital heart defects. She teaches a class on post-operative patient management, which is required training for each orientee moving through post op orientation. During this class she focuses on the finer points of progressing patients, how to advocate, be prepared and to respond accordingly to patient condition changes. Suzette role models how to prepare parents to see their child following the OR and reviews the expected progression of care. During her touch base with families, she explains the role of early ambulation and pulmonary toileting following the OR to better patient outcomes.

Suzette is a phenomenal nurse that impacts patients and families along with coaching each new generation of nurses. She is both a formal and informal leader of the unit and rallies her team to take on the challenges of the day. As a charge RN she has a positive personality that can handle anything that comes her way with grace and creative problem solving. She is flexible willing to care for any assignment or help with any task to meet the needs of the unit and patients.

Please see below for a specific example of how Suzette's skills can change the trajectory of a patients' hospital course.

A 3-month-old, Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS) patient presented at a clinic appointment with progressing desaturations (SpO₂ 60%). Due to the progressive desaturations the patient was taken for a Glenn Procedure later that week. Post operatively, the patient continued to be baseline desaturated with SpO₂ of 50%-60% and would have acute desaturations to 30%-40%. Due to this difficulty maintaining saturations the patient was sedated and placed on a cisatracurium drip for 48 hours. This next morning is when Suzette was assigned to be bedside RN for this specific patient. The x-ray was progressively worse with increased atelectasis, the echo demonstrated adequate blood flow through the branch

Pulmonary Arteries. With the inability to progress the patient, a plan was made for the patient to return to the CVOR the following day for exploration of the Glenn.

Suzette, having years of experience and extremely knowledgeable with Glenn physiology advocated to optimize all facets of the respiratory system, and support the passive flow Glenn physiology. Due to the rapport and trust she has with the providers, the team collaborated and followed Suzette's recommendations to stop the cisatracurium drip and begin airway clearance to recruit the atelectatic lungs. By lifting the paralytic and decreasing the sedation, the patient was able to cough and participate in the re-recruitment of the lungs. The Attending agreed with the plan of care and trusted Suzette's judgement to identify if the strategy demonstrated improvement in the patient condition or to notify the team if the paralytic and sedation needed to be restarted.

Within 4 hours of lifting the paralytic and decreasing sedation, combined with aggressive airway clearance, the patient's saturations improved from 50% to 70%. Within another 2 hours, the FiO2 was weaned from 100% to 50%, with the patient maintaining goal saturations of 75%-85%. By 2pm in the afternoon of the same day, the patient was extubated and FiO2 was weaned down to 30%. Through the advocacy and expertise of Suzette the patient progressed rapidly through the day and the impending exploratory surgery for the following day was canceled. The next day the patient was transferred out of the CICU to the step-down unit. The patient's mother was profoundly grateful for the care provided by Suzette and the change in trajectory of her child's hospital course.

This is one example of many which I could speak to that demonstrate the expertise of Suzette, and the impact she has on patients and families on a daily basis.

Tiffany Johnson BSN, RN, CCRN
Associate Clinical Nurse Manager CICU

Suzette is the nurse you hope to have at your most acute patient's bedside. She is calm and thoughtful with a wry sense of humor that keeps both parents and clinicians relaxed and focused on the child she is caring for that day. Her ability to understand her patient's physiology as well as needed trajectory of improvement, makes being the attending for that patient as effective as it is efficient. Her teaching and care also extend to her colleagues in nursing and other clinical staff. She is ready to help our clinical team with other patients without losing sight of her patient's needs or the needs of the unit. She embodies the clinical coach that we have all hoped for in our careers. Additionally, and importantly, she puts the patient's needs first while still caring for parents and the clinical team.

Dr. Cindy Barrett
Cardiac Intensivist and Medical Director of Heart Institute Quality and Safety

I first met Suzette 16 years ago, during my first week on service in the CICU. New to the place, I recognized her immediately as a nurse who knows her stuff, who tells you what

she's thinking, and who can be trusted to take care of the most complex patients with ease and expertise. She takes any bedside assignment—even a “stable pair”—with grace, empathy & professionalism; she is a charge nurse with unparalleled organizational skills; at end of life, her mastery in helping families negotiate the worst moments in their lives is noteworthy; in a code, she is the calm that stabilizes the room. In this era of revolving door of CICU nursing staff, she is an anchor. She LOVES bedside nursing, and precepting. When I am rounding, it is easy to know whom she has trained. She just leaves a mark. She is the best kept secret of Children's Hospital Colorado. It is with great admiration and expectation that I give Suzette Riddick my HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION for the PCICS Bedside Nursing Award. She is EXACTLY the nurse for whom you created this award. I hope you get to meet her!

Dr. Shannon Buckvold

Cardiac Intensivist and Medical Director of ECMO

I have worked with Suzette for the past 13 years and she was an incredible role model to me as I was starting my nursing career and she has continued to lead by example for dozens of new grads who have come through the CICU. Families adore her, nurses and providers admire her work, and she is trusted with the most acute patients in the unit. There is no one that deserves this PCICS bedside nursing nomination more than she does.

Jennifer Rafter

CICU Advanced Practice Provider and Former CICU nurse

She is an amazing nurse. She understands the patients and does a wonderful job taking care of them and progressing them. She is always good at connecting the parents with their children too. She has also been instrumental in teaching SO MANY of our new nurses, if they have been oriented by Suzette, I know they are off to a good start.

Sara Mackie

CICU Advanced Practice Provider

To be able to conceptualize what Suzette's extensive experience and knowledge means to our congenital heart defect patients would take hours. Her passion to lead and mentor new nurses though is probably what stands out the most for me. She has been a nurse at our center for over 18 years and still volunteers to take new graduate nurse and be the strong, compassionate teacher that they need to learn how to care for these fragile and vulnerable patients. She has a way of being enduring yet persistent with the new nurses in way that fosters strong critical thinking and expert nursing knowledge. Along with that her guidance and patient care knowledge as a charge nurse on the unit is unmatched. She is able to walk by a room with a 30 second snapshot and be able to provide some insight into how that patient could benefit from one small tweak that can mean the difference between a positive patient care progression or code event. Recently after a hard code at shift change she was able to bring the group together

and lead a hot debrief with the entire care team in a way that left the team feeling validated and at peace with how the process went. Her service, compassion and knowledge truly exemplify excellence in nursing care. It is great honor I nominate Suzette for the inaugural PCICS bedside nursing award.

Michelle Jantzen DNP
Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist

Suzette is a leader. She mentors many members of our team and across the spectrum of experience. She is a resource for those new to nursing, those new to CICU, and even those with lengthy careers such as hers. She approaches her fellow team members with grace and kindness while also being honest and fair. For example, when difficult conversations arise such as patient flow or assignments, Suzette can be a calming presence to help other team members navigate the challenge of the situation with a solution oriented mindset. She is a great partner to our leadership team, recognizing and appreciating the weight she carries as a tenured nurse on our team.

Suzette is a clinical expert. She is inherently trusted with any patient that comes onto our unit. When faced with staffing challenges and exploring various models, it was well known that our team could trust Suzette in any variety of situations. She is trusted and respected by all members of the multidisciplinary team.

Suzette is a family advocate. As demonstrated by the Daisy award nomination below, she supports our most fragile patients and their families. They know they are as safe as possible in her hands and value not only her expertise, but the care she brings in these most difficult times. Over her years of nursing, there are countless families who I am certain hold a special place in their heart for Suzette.

When I first heard of this award, Suzette immediately came to mind. I am certain she is precisely the kind of nurse who this recognition was created for. She is an exceptional member of our team. Suzette represents the highest level of nursing achievement, in an area of nursing that has exceptionally high standards and expectations for it's nurses. I cannot imagine a more deserving candidate than Suzette.

Katie English MSN, RN, CNL, CPN, CBC
Clinical Manager CICU

Suzette has been extremely supportive and impactful during our 6 month stay in the CICU. During some of our son's roughest times, when we didn't know if he would make it to surgery, Suzette diligently cared for and monitored his vitals, helping him to sustain his life vital surgery. I'm not sure if he would have made it through without her devotion, skill, and attentive care. We also commend Suzette for her ability to keep us informed and communicate even the toughest news with a warm heart and compassionate spirit. I am forever grateful for her ability to see our needs and our son's needs. She advocated for our children to come visit him for the

first time. They were able to meet him during a very precarious and challenging time. I wish I could include all of my beloved memories of Suze

Parents of a patient with congenital heart disease

I am a parent of a chronically ill child. My son has a congenital heart defect that will always require a team of medical specialist. One thing that can calm the storm when you child is once again admitted to the hospital is seeing a familiar face outside of their room in the intensive care unit. That person is integral to how your child's day progresses in the hospital. That person is your child's nurse.

There are amazing nurses who will care beautifully for you child and take care of their needs, trouble shoot complications working in line with doctors and specialists on the medical team. Then there are SUPER nurses- those who do all these things plus a few more. Those whose very presence as your child's caregiver give you a sense of calm and let's you know that no matter what- your child is in the very best of hands. Suzette was and is that nurse for us. Suzette has cared for our son Lincoln after his first open heart surgery at 5 days old and again after his second when the complications pile on one after another- she was placed on our son's service to provide that extra special care that comes from a career of experience, a heart for nursing and earned wisdom and respect in her profession. Words can't really dictate what she means to her cardiac team, her patients, and their families.

Parents of a patient with congenital heart disease