



Innovative Nurse-Led Initiatives Improve Population Health

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The evolving healthcare environment has put a new emphasis on population health. Healthcare organizations, and the nurses who work in them, are in a unique position to reach beyond hospital walls to address unmet needs and improve the health and lives of the community they serve. This month's Magnet[®] Perspectives column examines nurses' growing impact on population health through the lens of the 2019 Magnet Prize winner, OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center. Learn how OSF Saint Francis nurses developed an innovative program to address food insecurity among their community's most vulnerable residents and improve health outcomes. The column also explores how American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet-recognized organizations promote strong external partnerships that extend nurses' influence from the traditional one-patient-at-a-time approach to broader, population-based outreach.

As the United States continues to work out the details of making healthcare services more widely available to all, issues of population health become increasingly important. This imperative gives nurses a unique opportunity to assume new roles within their healthcare organizations to promote wellness and disease prevention in the community, increase outreach efforts, and address health disparities, especially in underserved areas.

Breaking the Mold of Standard Nursing Practice

As Adler et al¹ reported, socioeconomic conditions underlie many health disparities and compel healthcare providers to find ways to develop and strengthen programs that address them.¹ When a Community Health Needs Assessment identified food insecurity as a significant health disparity in their service area, nurses at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center (OSF Saint Francis) in Peoria, Illinois, came together to tackle the problem. They partnered with local stakeholders to devise a multifaceted, evidence-based intervention to reduce food insecurity and improve health for those living in the most impoverished areas.

Elements include a community garden to provide fresh fruits and vegetables; a Care-A-Van that visits thousands of patients each year, accounting for a 2.5% reduction in ED visits; faith community nursing; and increased education for patients, families, and clinicians. Long-term projected benefits include healthier behaviors, improved screening for food insecurity, appropriate use of the ED, and a decrease in chronic illness and stress.



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This cutting-edge approach to healthcare delivery shows how nurses stepped up to break the mold of standard practice and find unique solutions to one of the country's most intractable health challenges. It also earned OSF Saint Francis the 2019 American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet Prize.

The Magnet Prize recognizes organizations with unique programs where innovative action transforms nursing practice. Interventions and outcomes benefit the nursing profession as a whole and have a direct impact on patients in various settings. The award serves as a means for acknowledging peak performance within credentialed Magnet organizations and is the highest honor ANCC bestows within the Magnet community. Since 2007, it has been sponsored by Cerner, a global health platform and innovation company.

Frontline Nurses' Unique Opportunity

Research by Bachrach and Thomas² and Thornton and Persaud³ found that nurses on the frontlines of healthcare are uniquely positioned to identify issues affecting the health and well-being of their patients, recognize

patterns across patient populations, link patients with community resources and social services, and develop broad-based interventions.^{2,3}

ANCC's Magnet Recognition Program promotes nurses' involvement in all of these activities. To meet the Magnet model's structural empowerment component,⁴ organizations must demonstrate that their nurses participate in community healthcare outreach, as well as the assessment and prioritization of the community's healthcare needs.

As the *2019 Magnet® Application Manual*⁴ states, Magnet nurses support organizational goals, advance the nursing profession, and enhance professional development by extending their influence to professional and community groups.

With the nation's healthcare system moving increasingly toward a population health model, nurses in Magnet organizations are in a prime position to impact the provision of culturally and socially sensitive care. Developing strong partnerships with the community will improve patient outcomes, address unmet needs, and create a more equitable, flourishing community.

References

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