May 6–12

Nurses Week Events

FRIDAY, MAY 6

Morgan Award for Adult Inpatient Oncology Nursing
11:30 a.m.–12 p.m. | Mitchell 6th Floor

06

MONDAY, MAY 9

Nurse Awards Ceremony
2–4 p.m. | DCAM 4th Floor Atrium

09

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11

In Honor of Healing Hands—Chaplains will be rounding on nursing units throughout the day, evening and night shifts.

Mock Trial: Pet Therapy
12:15–1:30 p.m. | L168 Dora DeLee

11

THURSDAY, MAY 12

Unit, Clinic and Department Recognitions—Throughout the day

Advanced Practice Nurses Meeting
10–11 a.m. | P-117 Billings Auditorium

12

APNs

THERE ARE MORE THAN 150 ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES (APNs) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO MEDICAL CENTER, serving in almost every department. But many physicians, nurses and patients are still unsure of what exactly an APN is. APNs are registered nurses (RNs) who have gone further in their training, and are nationally certified in a health care specialty area. APNs can conduct physical examinations, write prescriptions and even evaluate diagnostic tests, depending on their specialties and their privileges that the hospital grants them.

It’s really hard for people to figure out who we are,” said Anne Pohlman, MSN, RN, CCRN, CCRN, FCCM, clinical nurse specialist at the Medical Center. “There are so many different initials. Our roles have changed in the past 10 years.”

In 2001, Illinois law expanded the role of APNs, allowing them to offer certain types of care that only physicians provided in years past. In Illinois, four types of APNs are recognized: certified nurse practitioners (CNPs); clinical nurse specialists (CNs); certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs); and certified nurse midwives (CNMs).

One of the Medical Center’s advanced practice nurses, Pamela Beauduy, APN-CNP, brings vaccinations and physical exams directly to Chicago Public Schools students who tend to lack access to medical care. She travels to South Side schools and examines students in a “Mobile Care Van,” which is actually a 40-foot truck equipped with a greeting room, two exam rooms and a lab.

“I love the mobile unit because I really feel that we are meeting a need,” Beauduy said. “Many of the kids haven’t seen a doctor in years.” She gives these students a list of local clinics, created by the Medical Center’s Urban Health Initiative.

Pohlman started her nursing career with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing, working as an RN in the intensive care unit (ICU). She quickly found her interest turning to research, especially when it came to finding ways to improve the care of patients. “I would always ask myself, ‘Is this patient as comfortable as I would want to be if I were in the bed?’” she said. Noting that some patients were uncomfortable, she concluded, “We can do this better.”

She decided to pursue a master’s degree, specializing as a CNS in critical care, then began collaborating with Jesse Hall, MD, chief of the Section of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine. They have worked together ever since. She and Hall have found ways to improve patient sedation, reduce pain and hasten patient release.

Pohlman coordinates the studies and analyzes the data. “I’m the one real constant on the unit, thinking about how we can implement new research and deliver better care,” said Pohlman, now nurse coordinator of critical care studies for pulmonary and critical care medicine.

Hall praised his colleague for her innovation. “For the past 20 years, Anne Pohlman has been instrumental in making the ICU a laboratory where questions could be asked and answered,” he said. “And she has shared this knowledge with our peer institutions around the country.”

This is no easy feat. Hall said, given the perception that the ICU is a crisis-driven environment where there is little time to test and implement innovations carefully. “It takes a real champion to conduct research and incorporate findings into the ICU culture,” Hall said. “Anne Pohlman is that champion.”

Hall said APNs bring a set of clinical expertise that is distinct from what’s mastered by physicians at any level of practice. “They really ground our research in the bedside realities of patient care.”

A Job Worth Every Tear

WHEN JEANNIE SCHEEL WAS NAMED THE WINNER OF THE BRITTANY MCKINNEY REMEMBER ME FUND AWARD IN MAY 2010, SHE DIDN’T THINK ABOUT THE STATUS OR MONEY THAT WENT WITH IT. SHE WAS THINKING ABOUT THE GIRL FOR WHOM IT WAS NAMED: A YOUNG PATIENT WHO LIVED LIFE WITH SPARK BEFORE SHE PASSED AWAY.

“Brittany was a fantastic girl,” remembered Scheel, RN, MSN, CPON, FNP-BC, a former pediatric oncology nurse in Comer Children’s Hospital and now a nurse practitioner in the hematology/oncology clinic at the University of Chicago. “She was so spunky, feisty, funny. She loved to decorate her room at the hospital and just have a great time.”

Brittany was 13 when she died of acute myelogenous leukemia in December 2007. Her grandmother, Mary Scher, established the Brittany McKinney Remember Me Fund in Brittany’s honor to help nurses at the Medical Center continue their education. As a pediatric oncology nurse, Scheel did not have an easy job. There were days she would find a private corner and cry for awhile.

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Despite being a full-time mother, Savickaite says, "My kids were 100 percent behind me," she said. "They were phenomenal." Since then, she has gone on to receive a master’s degree and advanced training as a certified pediatric oncology nurse (CPON). Her former supervisor, Terrill Park, RN, BSN, CPON, described her as a top-flight professional.

"Everyone on this floor looked up to her because of the way she conducts herself," said Park, patient care manager on Comer 6. "She was a great patient advocate. She made absolutely sure that these kids and their families get their needs met."

Park noted Scheel also found time to serve as a nurse preceptor, training other nurses on the unit. "She was always willing to take time from her busy day to talk to a nurse who has questions or needs help," he said.

The position was not easy. Scheel sometimes worked at home when her children’s treatment wasn’t going well, and she even attended patient funerals to show support for families. The grief, tough, was eclipsed by her warm memories, she said, and the joy she found in everyday relationships with the patients still fighting for their lives.

"Kids are so amazing, and so resilient," she said. "I love their energy. I love their positive attitude." Scheel also admires families, and even stays in contact with parents once their children have left the hospital. "Some really mourn the loss of their ‘hospital’ family, even when their child is better," she explained. "So we keep in touch through phone calls and e-mails for awhile."

Brittany McKinney’s grandmother, Mary Siler, visited the staff on Comer 6 even after her granddaughter died. Siler would bring baked goods or gift certificates. "She’s really a wonderful lady," said Scheel, who added she was "humbled and honored" to receive the Brittney McKinney Remember Me Award.

"The best part was, I got to see Brittany’s grandmother again that day, and give her a hug," she said. "And she said she was doing OK."