

## Nursing professor celebrates 48 years of teaching UCO students



Nelda Fister, M.S., R.N. serves as Assistant Professor for the Department of Nursing at the University of Central Oklahoma. She started a “worry envelope” for students to privately share their school/personal worries.

story by Van Mitchell, Contributing Writer

Nelda Fister, M.S., R.N. was born into nursing, and she continues that path today at age 80, as Assistant Professor for the Department of Nursing at the University of Central Oklahoma.

She is serving in her 48th year of teaching at UCO, where she works with 150-170 students each semester.

“I always wanted to be in nursing,” she said. “I grew up on a farm and there were a lot of good doctors/farm families/role models that helped

me look at that road.”

Fister was the only member of her family to go to college. She graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University in 1965.

“College was never not going to be an option,” she said. “Neither of my parents completed high school. My mother quit school when her mother died so she could stay home and care for her younger siblings. My father served in World War

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## SIDS Remains One of the Top Three Causes of Infant Deaths in Oklahoma



October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) awareness month and for the first time since 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has released an updated set of recommendations for reducing infant sleep-related deaths.

Updated recommendations offer more specific action steps to take, primarily focus on highlighting protective factors for babies’ sleep environment, products to avoid, and practices that can reduce the risk of SIDS and SUID (Sudden Unexpected Infant Death).

SIDS is the sudden, unexpected death of a baby younger than one year of age that does not have a known cause even after a complete investigation. SUID covers all infant sleep-related deaths, including those for which there is an identified cause.

The AAP recommends infants sleep in their parents’ room, close to the parents’ bed, but on a separate surface designed for infants, ideally for at least the first six months.

This can be a crib, portable crib (pack n play), or bassinet (for the first five months) as long as it’s a firm, flat, non-inclined sleep surface to reduce the risk of suffocation or wedging/entrapment. Babies should only sleep wearing a onesie and wearable blanket (sleep sack) without anything else in the sleep space such as blankets, loose sheets, pillows and toys.

“New parents are getting information from grandparents, social media, and their doctor,” said James Craig, the OSDH Infant Safe Sleep Coordinator. “We want to make sure they have the most accurate and up-to-date information. Using the ABCs acronym is an easy way to remember the basics. Babies should sleep Alone, on their Backs, in an appropriate Crib, and in a tobacco/vape free home. Following these simple guidelines will help reduce the risk of SIDS-related deaths.”

Of note, the AAP, for the first time, has also

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## FISTER

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I, and was preparing to prepare for duty for World War II, when he was notified, the war had ended. Following my parents' marriage, they settled in the Oklahoma Panhandle and began a hard life of farming during the Depression. It was important to them that their daughter receive a good education, as they believed it would bring opportunities they did not have. They (parents) were going to make it work and they did."

Fister said her parents' faith helped shape her desire to help others.

"My parents' belief in God guided their life, and I learned at an early age that the development of a strong value system, and caring for others was important," she said. "I was very lucky to have a stable home that provided positive guidance as I navigated the developmental tasks of childhood."

Prior to beginning her teaching career, she was pediatric supervisor at Wesley Hospital in Oklahoma City. She joined UCO after several years on the faculty at Oklahoma Baptist University.

"I have seen a lot of changes," she said. "I have worked under six presidents at UCO, and have (taught) thousands of students."

Fister serves on multiple committees as well as the UCO Faculty Senate.

Her focus on the importance of community involvement was pronounced through helping establish pediatric triage following the April 19, 1995 Alfred P. Murrah bombing.

She has served as Mace Bearer for UCO Commencement Ceremonies, and has multiple honors including the first Excellence in Education Award for Sigma Theta Tau Beta-Delta-Chapter-At-Large. She received the Neely Annual Excellence in Teaching Award in 2019.

The first nursing class from the nursing department at the University of Central Oklahoma graduated in 1972. Since that time, more than 3,500 graduate nurses have entered the workforce.

Students interested in earning a nursing degree from the University of Central Oklahoma now have multiple options for their education. Students may obtain their BS through the Traditional Track Bachelor of Science in Nursing, the Fast Track B.S. in Nursing and the Online R.N. to B.S. track. UCO also offers a two-year Master of Science in Nursing degree.

Fister said success in and out of the classroom requires hard work and dedication.

"Success in the nursing program and later in the profession requires a high degree of responsibility," she said. "Success in the professional domain is the final outcome of this education. "My goal has been to provide students with an intentional

direction to develop study methods that will ensure success as they expand their knowledge base, think critically about concepts, and apply knowledge in a variety of settings. I want them (nursing students) to grow academically, but I also want them to grow professionally."

Fister's care for her students reached a new peak this year with the implantation of a "worry envelope" that is posted on a bulletin board outside of her office.

She said it allows students to write down their worries in private.

"They write down their concerns, and if they want me to, I will pray for them," she said.

Fister said she isn't sure if this will be her last year teaching at UCO, but adds she has plenty of outside interests including cooking and sewing that would keep her busy.

"I think I am making a difference," she said. "I keep saying this is going to be my last year, and then I have students send me a note that says you made such a difference. That is what keeps me here. This place has been so much a part of my life. I don't know what I am going to do, but I have a lot of interests, so I will be okay."

For more information about University of Central Oklahoma Department of Nursing visit:

<https://www.uco.edu/cms/academics/nursing>

## SIDS

Continued from Page 1

deemed weighted products such as sleep sacks, swaddles, sleepers, and blankets, integrated with weights and marketed to help babies sleep deeper, unsafe to use. The AAP also warns against using cardiorespiratory monitors, such as monitors placed and worn on an infant's foot, marketed to track your baby's breathing due to limited evaluation for safety, accuracy, or efficacy by the FDA as other medical devices are.

"The AAP also mentions concerns those type of monitors could falsely reassure parents that an ailing baby is healthy, or alarm parents that a healthy baby is sick," said Craig.

For more information on safe sleep visit Safe Sleep For Your Baby ([oklahoma.gov](http://oklahoma.gov)) or email James Craig at [jamescc@health.ok.gov](mailto:jamescc@health.ok.gov).

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[csibleyinsures@gmail.com](mailto:csibleyinsures@gmail.com)  
BS Health Studies-Gerontology

**Steven Sibley, RET/DAV**  
Life, Health, LTC, & Disability  
405-850-1569  
[ssibleyinsures@gmail.com](mailto:ssibleyinsures@gmail.com)  
MBA - Healthcare Administration



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# Traveling, Learning Part of Nursing Professor's Life Goals

Story and photo Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Pam Melson, RN, MSN, BC-NC, Clinical Assistant Professor, with the Kramer School of Nursing at Oklahoma City, visited Nepal this summer.

She has students in her class from Nepal, Manisha Raut and Punam Baral, that connected her with family members while she and her son, Nathan Hursh, were visiting abroad.

"They (students) wanted me to meet their families," Melson said. "With two different families, they showed us all over Kathmandu, they showed us places we would have never gone to had we not gone there with them. It was really life-changing. Seeing the kindness of people and how they function together in a community, I loved everything about it."

Melson said her experience in Nepal reaffirmed the importance of OCU's international student pipeline.

"It was wonderful being in another country," she said. "It made me realize how important it is for us to have

international students at OCU, and understand the way that other people live."

Melson has been with Kramer since the Fall of 2012. Prior to her teaching at Oklahoma City University, her primary nursing roles were in diabetes education/wellness and prevention, psychiatric, and hospice nursing. While her primary current role is the RN-BSN program teaching Community, Servant leadership and Holistic nursing courses.

Melson assists with the traditional courses of Mental and Family Health clinicals. Her greatest teaching passion is traveling with students to Belize, Mexico and NE Oklahoma to explore diversity and commonalities of traditional and alternative health care practices in the community.

She has also led community health nursing excursions to Mexico, and helps organize an annual event called the Caring Across Cultures Conference. She



Pam Melson, RN, MSN, BC-NC, Clinical Assistant Professor, with the Kramer School of Nursing at Oklahoma City, visited Nepal this summer along with her son Nathan Hursh. She and her son are pictured at the Changunarayan Temple in the Bhaktapur district.

serves on the Continuing Education Health Nursing program in Oaxaca, Committee who organizes this event. Mexico, allows students to gain

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See LEARNING Page 5



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Pam Melson, RN, MSN, BC-NC, Clinical Assistant Professor, with the Kramer School of Nursing at Oklahoma City, visited Nepal this summer along with her son Nathan Hursh. Pictured with them is Badul Raut (center), who is a cousin of Manisha Raut, one of Melson's OCU nursing students. Melson and her son attended Badul Raut's coming of age event called the Bartabanda Festival.

**LEARNING**  
Continued from Page 4

international clinical experience while also learning about historic and indigenous sites in central Mexico. The program has been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but is planning to resume next summer

The program, led by Professors Melson and Beth Pitman, satisfies the required clinical and service hours for OCU's Community Health Nursing course or a Servant Leadership course. The course includes a homestay, some traditional meals, lectures and activities about community health practices and traditions. It also includes what is mentioned below as well as private and public hospitals and service-learning opportunity is a hostel for families whose loved ones are in the public hospital-many people must travel far for health care.

When the program resumes, students will learn about traditional medicine in Oaxaca's botanical gardens, visit the indigenous Zapotec village to learn about local traditions and healthcare practices, and see the Monte Alban archaeological site.

"They get to see how education works, and how healthcare works, but they also get to learn about the culture and the food," Melson said. "It is them being fully immersed into another culture. We all have strengths and weaknesses. I love seeing students discover that on their own, and teach me things. They come home with new eyes. We always need to learn from one another."

Melson said she respects the nursing students who step out of

their comfort zone to study abroad, and immerse themselves with fellow students at OCU, forming life-long bonds.

"I think it is pretty brave, because I never did that as a student," she said. "The first thing I learned is that they are brave enough to come from another country. I get to see how people adapt well. It adds a richness, because I also get to see their communion and their relationships with other students, and what they teach them."

Melson said students from different cultures can learn from each other, and in turn become better at their professional craft.

"If we always believe that our way is one way, and our truth is the truth, then I think we miss out," she said. "I think you see them work together in the classroom; it begins to weave this tapestry of what communion really means. I want them to be their greatest selves. I hope they learn to listen and know what their patient's cultures are. Just asking a few questions and listening, I think that is when healing begins to take place."

Melson said she hopes her passion for traveling abroad and learning has helped make her a better professor, a better friend, and a better person.

"I tell students that I am an open-door teacher," she said. "I want to always learn from my students, and I want them to know that I am a safe person to learn from. I want to help them to think about things in a different way, and I want to see their way, whether I agree with it or not. I love teaching, and I am grateful for every day."



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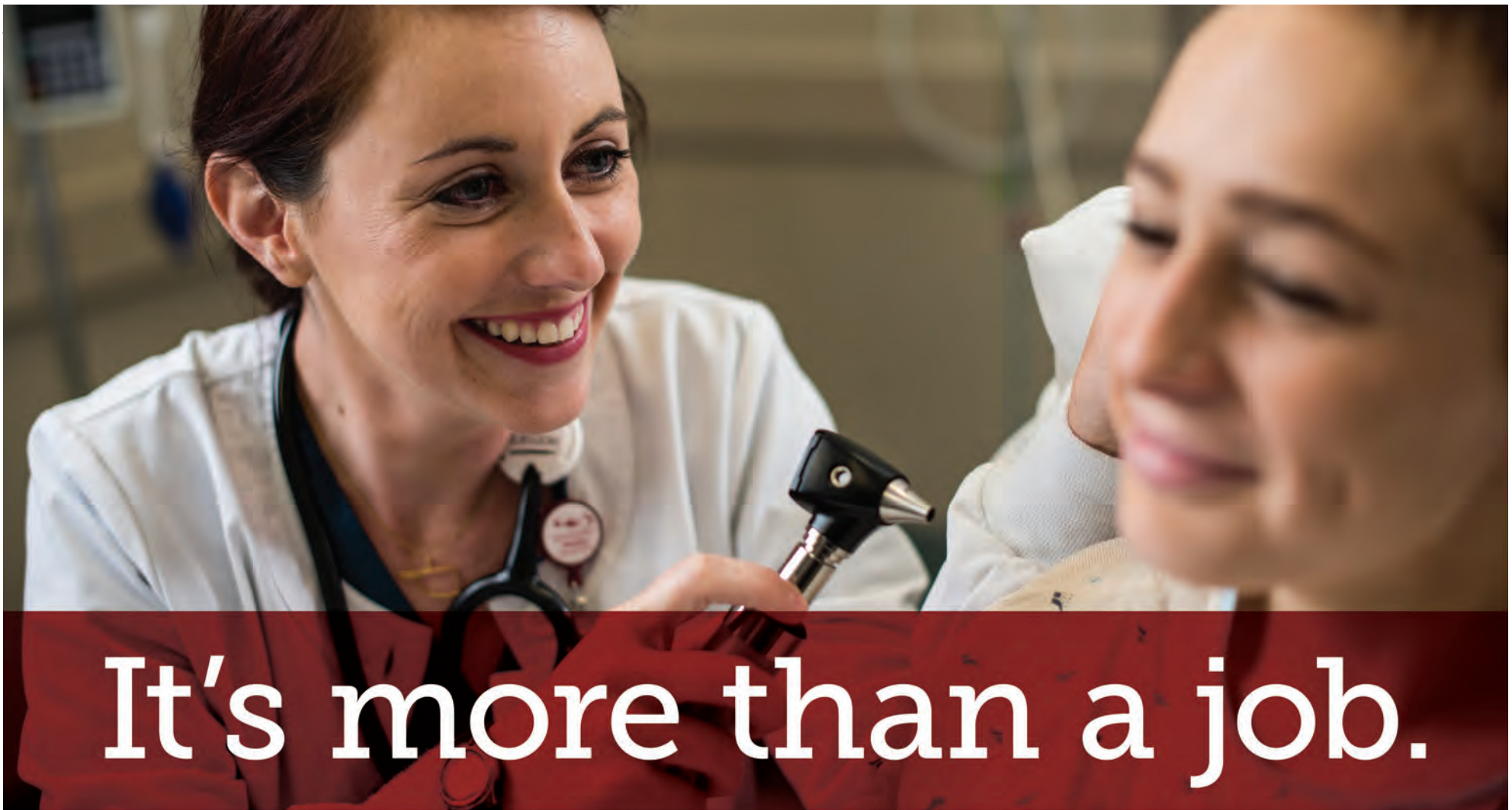
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# Rewarding and Compassionate Care at Karman Legacy Hospice



Nursing is considered one of the most noble and compassionate professions in the world. Those who choose nursing as a career have a strong desire to help others heal and return to normal life. But what about those patients who will not be returning to a normal life, and instead have received a terminal diagnosis? How can taking care of patients at the end of their life be rewarding? The staff of Karman Legacy Hospice in Stillwater answer the questions that many healthcare providers have about the challenges and rewards of providing hospice care.

Sherry Crockett, Director of Karman Legacy Hospice, has been a nurse for 32 years. When asked how she became a hospice nurse, she said, "I was a home health nurse working in quality assurance. A friend called me to discuss the idea of joining her to work at a local hospice agency. After being allowed to shadow my friend on a few patient visits, I was hooked."

Sherry said that while she has worked in many aspects of nursing over her career, she feels most fulfilled when she has the honor to provide her patients with the best quality of life in their final days.

"Being a hospice nurse is the greatest job," said Sherry. "Our patients give us more than we give them. I have a sense of purpose working with hospice patients and

their families."

With nearly 20 years of hospice experience, Mary Vanzant, LPN, has found her passion serving as an urgent care/on call hospice nurse. She remembers that during her first year of hospice nursing, she experienced a whirlwind of feelings and emotions.

"You realize you are only here for a short time, and not invincible," she said. "It will humble you to see the importance of living life everyday as though it was your last, enjoying the little things and how precious time is."

Kristie Talley, RN, has been part of the hospice family at Karman Legacy for just over 5 years. She was first introduced to the hospice process after her grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and there were no longer any paths for active treatment. Kristie had heard of hospice but was not sure what all it entailed. She said she quickly realized that hospice is not where patients just go to die, but where they go to live.

"Let me clarify that my grandmother did die, but hospice helped her live out the remainder of her time on earth the way she wanted to, on her terms, with dignity and respect, with little to no pain, and surrounded by loved ones and not machines," said Kristie.

Tiffany Myers, LPN, has worked as a hospice nurse for 2.5 years. She was first introduced to hospice when her grandfather was a hospice

patient.

"I saw the love, care and exceptional compassion that went into keeping him comfortable, and my family was part of the nurse's concern as well," said Tiffany. "I wanted to be a part of that most important time in a person's life."

Tiffany said that she loves her job, and she is proud of the end of life care she is able to provide for her patients and their family.

Danielle Vargas, RN, has been providing hospice care for about 6 months. Like a lot of other hospice nurses, she was introduced to hospice care when a family member was receiving care.

"I had an uncle that was sick with cancer that was receiving hospice services," she said. "Something just clicked during that experience for me, and I felt drawn to it."

She said that after a difficult day at work, she refills her bucket by

spending time with her family. "I have two little girls that are absolute blessings."

Angela Garcia, RN, has been a hospice nurse for just 2 months after previously working as a CNA. She advises anyone considering hospice to make sure you are doing it for the right reasons.

"You have to be open-minded to everyone's beliefs and center your care around what is best for each individual," said Angela.

She continued to say that hospice team members are special people with the ability to spread love and comfort to those most in need.

"There's no better reward or feeling in the world like being able to fulfill someone's dying wishes and letting their loved ones see them die peacefully," she said.

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# OU Health Hematologist-Oncologist Receives Award to Study Rare Type of Sarcoma

Abdul Rafeh Naqash, M.D., a hematologist-oncologist with OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, has been granted an Impact Award from the Hope Foundation for Cancer Research. The foundation is part of the SWOG (Southwest Oncology Group) Cancer Research Network.

Naqash will use the award to study alveolar soft part sarcoma, a cancer that can come from different types of soft tissue, such as muscle, fat or nerves. It is a rare and deadly disease with limited treatment options, and it primarily affects younger patients. Naqash previously helped to lead a phase 2 clinical trial testing a treatment for alveolar soft part sarcoma when he was a fellow at the National Cancer Institute. The new award will further his work on one of the rarest types of sarcoma.

"There is an unmet need

regarding research into alveolar soft part sarcoma," he said. "We will be looking at tumor samples and clinical data and will eventually try to develop novel therapies for patients with this type of sarcoma."

This is the first time a researcher on the campus of the OU Health Sciences Center has received an Impact Award from the Hope Foundation. It is a competitive award given twice a year to researchers leading projects that involve scientific risk but that may result in significant breakthroughs in cancer research.

"We hope this work leads to future clinical trials at Stephenson Cancer Center in this area," said Naqash, who is also an assistant professor hematology/oncology in the OU College of Medicine.

For more information about Naqash's research, visit [www.ouhealth.com](http://www.ouhealth.com) and search his name under "Find a Doctor."

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Abdul Rafeh Naqash, M.D., a hematologist-oncologist with OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

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CROSSWORD: Cardiac Nursing

ANSWERS ON PAGE 13

Across

2. problem with one of the two left bundle fascicles

5. valve between left atrium and left ventricle

6. valve between right atrium and right ventricle

7. st segment elevation MI

8. filling phase of cardiac cycle

9. represents ventricular depolarization

12. gets unoxygenated blood from coronary veins

14. ventricular repolarization

16. causes "tall and tented" T waves

18. ability to spontaneously generate an impulse

19. pumps blood to lungs

21. pumping phase of cardiac cycle

22. represents atrial depolarization

23. direction of depolarization of the ventricles

Down

1. pumps blood to arteries

3. normal pacemaker of the heart

4. location of SA node

10. ability of muscle cells to shorten

11. type of ventricular tachycardia

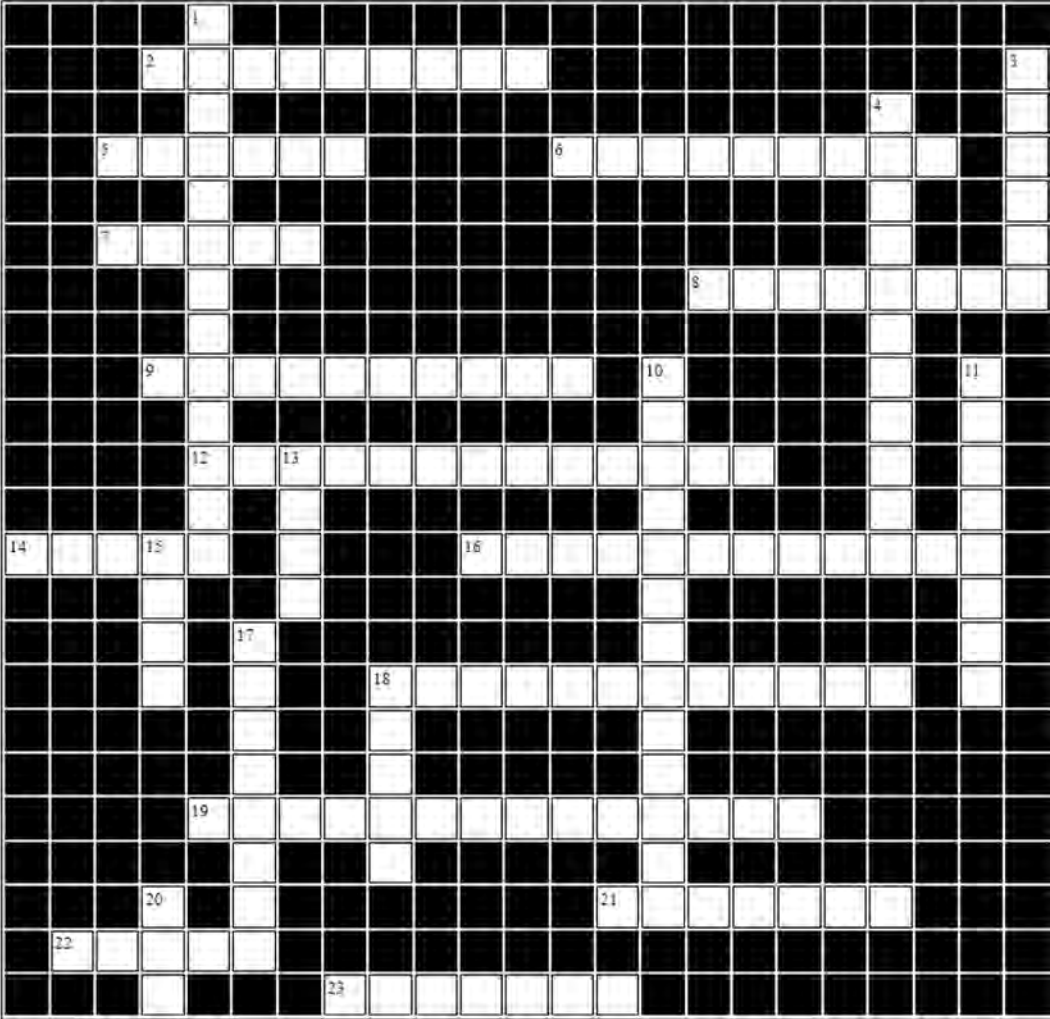
13. commonly associated with inferior MI, abbr.

15. lethal ventricular arrhythmia, abbr.

17. fibers that conduct impulses in the ventricles

18. large artery

20. provides blood to left ventricle, abbr.



By Krystal Herrington



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# The cost of nurse turnover in 23 numbers

Molly Gamble, Vice President of Editorial, Becker's Healthcare

Nurse recruitment and retention is top of mind for every hospital and health system executive in 2022, particularly those responsible for ensuring health systems' financial stability.

The 2022 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report features input from 272 hospitals in 32 states on registered nurse turnover, retention, vacancy rates, recruitment metrics and staffing strategies. It found the average cost of turnover for one staff RN increased 15 percent from 2020 to 2021, to \$46,100, among other dollar figures and statistics that are helpful to understand the financial implications of one of healthcare's most challenging labor disruptions.

Here are 23 numbers that illustrate the cost of nurse turnover, according to the most recent edition of the report, which can be found in full here.



Molly Gamble, Vice President of Editorial, Becker's Healthcare.

1. In 2021, the turnover rate for staff RNs increased by **8.4 percent**, resulting in a national average of **27.1 percent**.
2. The average cost of turnover for a staff RN is **\$46,100**, with the range averaging **\$33,900 to \$58,300**. This is up from the average cost of turnover for an RN in 2020, which was **\$40,038**.
3. Each percent change in RN turnover will cost or save the average hospital **\$262,300** per year.
4. More than **60 percent** of respondents said the RN vacancy rate in their hospital tops **15 percent**; **6.5 percent** said they have an RN vacancy rate of less than **5 percent**.
5. The RN Recruitment Difficulty Index is **87 days** on average, regardless of specialty, meaning it essentially takes **3 months** to recruit an experienced RN.
6. For every **20 travel RNs** eliminated, a hospital can save **\$4,203,000** on average.
7. From 2020 to 2021, the percent change in regional RN turnover ranged from **3.2 percent to 12.2 percent**. The Northeast saw the high end of this range while the North Central region saw the low end.
8. Over the past five years, RNs in step down, emergency services, behavioral health and telemetry were most mobile with a cumulative turnover rate between **101.3 percent and 111.4 percent**. "Essentially, every five years, these departments will turn over their entire RN staff," the report states.
9. RNs in surgical services, women's health and pediatrics were less mobile, with 2021 turnover rates of **18.8 percent, 19.5 percent and 19.6 percent**, respectively, compared to the national average of **27.1 percent**.

As appears in [www.beckershospitalreview.com](http://www.beckershospitalreview.com)

The 2023 Education Guide is coming! To Be Included in this year's issue send an email to [advertising@okcnursingtimes.com](mailto:advertising@okcnursingtimes.com) or call Amanda at 405-631-5100



## Norman Regional Nine Celebrates Grand Opening

Community members got their first look inside Norman Regional Nine recently. A grand opening celebration was held on October 22. The healthcare facility is located at 2000 Ann Branden Blvd., Norman, OK 73071. It includes a freestanding emergency department, primary and specialty care clinics, physical and occupational therapy, lab and imaging.

"This is an exciting time for southeast Norman, Noble and all the nearby communities that have been underserved for so long," said Richie Splitt, Norman Regional Health System president and CEO. "This facility is as beautiful as it is functional, and we are thrilled to show it to our friends and neighbors. This will be a fantastic event for everyone in the family."

Community members were also invited to tour the facility and meet the medical providers offering care at Norman Regional Nine.

Norman Regional Nine opens to the public at 6 a.m. Oct. 24. Photos of the facility are available here.

Norman Regional Nine is the first Inspire Health construction project to be completed. The Ambulatory Care Center is scheduled to open next summer. Behavioral Health Porter Village is also set to open in 2023. The HealthPlex expansion and renovation is expected to be complete by summer 2024.



# INTEGRIS Health Philanthropist of the Year Award

Philanthropy is defined as a spirit of goodwill toward all people; or a charitable act or gift. Each year, INTEGRIS Health presents the Philanthropist of the Year award to a deserving community member who continuously gives of themselves.

This year, the prestigious honor was awarded to all seven INTEGRIS Health Volunteer Auxiliaries throughout the state.

There are over 800 volunteers across the INTEGRIS Health system, ranging in age from two to 102. The youngest is a two-year-old pet therapy pup and the most senior is Ruby Wilson at INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center who just celebrated her 102nd birthday.

INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center Founded: 1957 Worked more than 726 thousand service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$412 thousand dollars INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center Founded: 1960 Worked more than 3 million service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$20 million dollars INTEGRIS Health Miami Hospital Founded: 1961 Worked more than 127 thousand service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$170 thousand dollars INTEGRIS Health Grove Hospital Founded: 1964 Worked more than 726 thousand service hours



Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$401 thousand dollars INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center Founded: 1965 Worked more than 582 thousand service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$2.8 million dollars INTEGRIS Health Canadian Valley Hospital Founded: 2001 Worked more than: 443 thousand service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$326 thousand dollars INTEGRIS Health Edmond Founded: 2011 Worked more than 44 thousand service hours Philanthropic giving has exceeded \$180 thousand dollars

Historically, INTEGRIS Health volunteers have exceeded 5.3 million service hours and given more than 25 million dollars to the health care system. They have helped fund major projects like the INTEGRIS Health Hospice House, INTEGRIS Health Cancer Institute and Arcadia Trails Center for Addiction Recovery. They have also helped purchase public safety vehicles, hospital helipads, cardiac equipment, wheelchairs and baby isolettes.

The Philanthropist of the Year award was given during the annual INTEGRIS Health Foundation gala. Vanessa Hunholz, a volunteer at INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center, accepted the award on behalf of all seven facility auxiliaries.

"On behalf of the hundreds of INTEGRIS Health volunteers from across the state, we thank the Foundation for this honor. We come from different places in life with varied experiences and talents and diverse gifts. The common thread is the desire to serve and give back to our communities."

Hunholz adds, "No matter which INTEGRIS Health campus is our home, we serve with no expectation of awards or recognition. So this tremendous honor is humbly accepted with our deepest gratitude."

If you are interested in becoming an INTEGRIS Health volunteer, please visit [integriskok.com/volunteer](https://www.integriskok.com/volunteer). For questions, call Volunteer Services at 405-949-3183.

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