

Oklahoma's Nursing Times

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Healing Scope: Improving Lives

Read Krystal's story on page 2

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A healing scope of nursing

RN's work improves lives

by James Coburn, staff writer

Krystal Nichols, RN, McBride Orthopedic Hospital, was in high school studying her career options when a friend's mother told her about the stability and personal enrichment she experienced as a registered nurse. Nichols has been a nurse since 2008.

In 2024 she accepted a new challenge by transferring from the ER to case management.

Nichols served four years in the emergency department of McBride Orthopedic Hospital when joining the hospital five years ago. However, she will occasionally work in the ER when a need arises.

"I wanted to learn something new," Nichols said.

McBride has been very supportive. She met with the manager of case management who assisted her in the transition. Nichols knew case management requires a lot of experience. Nichols would prove to be superb for the role.

Her previous experience encompasses working at then-Unity Health Center, Shawnee (now St. Anthony Hospital-Shawnee, Norman Regional Hospital, the Oklahoma Heart Hospital-South, and SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital, located in Oklahoma City. She soon found contentment at McBride.

"I like the smaller hospital environment. I feel like we're able to provide good patient care with staffing ratios. With it being a smaller entity, a lot of times if there is an issue your managers are approachable," she said. "You can talk to them and sometimes that makes it a little easier when it is a smaller place. Overall, I've had a really good experience."

Her role in case management helps navigate the patient's experience. Case managers visit with each patient to explain their discharge plans. Orthopedic patients will often have home health and outpatient physical therapy after their surgical procedure. Nichols also deals with health insurance issues by making sure the surgery has been approved and by sharing necessary documentation. The pre/op nurses make calls to answer any questions patients have prior to surgery.

Being a case manager is definitely a different way of thinking, Nichols said.

She loves the variety. Nichols tweaks discharge plans according to what the patient wants. Working in the ER brings more time constraints with quick emergency responses.

"In nursing overall, you have to be empathetic and understanding —

especially in the ER," Nichols said. "People come here in pain and aren't their best selves," Nichols explained. "So, you have to realize that it's a big event for them to go to the ER."

ER nurses should be motivated to double check orders to make sure everything is correct, she added. Having a good relationship with coworkers and the physician helps in questioning, she said.

"Ultimately, you want to take good care of the patients," Nichols said.

Teamwork is what she enjoys most about the nurses. They work with a synergetic blend of expertise gained by longevity and expertise.

"It's so important in nursing because we could all have patients that are very sick and require a lot of care," Nichols continued. "If you don't have good teamwork, you're drowning, and the patient is suffering. It's really a huge priority to have good communication."

Nursing has been a career that allows her to effectively interact with her community.

"It definitely keeps you grounded because it makes you realize your health is everything. It really does affect your everyday life and your relationships," Nichols said. "So, it's nice to know you can help someone overcome such an event in their life."

She is grateful for being part of a team that saves lives or helps patients become their personal best.

"Whenever you have an injury, you're very grateful to have someone just help you out of the car," she said. "There are different circumstances but of course the more critical the patient is, you definitely see how big of a difference you can make in a 30-minute time span. If you walk in and a patient starts having slurred speech, you have to recognize that right away so you can scan them for a CT scan to make sure they are not having a stroke."

It's always heartfelt when viewing a patient going home to resume their lives.

"I always tell them, 'I hope I see you out in the community — not back in the ER,'" she said.

Nichols gives herself ample time to care for herself as well. She loves gardening and bicycling with her husband.

"Oklahoma City has great bike paths now. And, I have three dogs and there's always something to do with them, too."

"Teamwork is so important in nursing because we could all have patients that are very sick and require a lot of care. If you don't have good teamwork, you're drowning, and the patient is suffering. It's really a huge priority to have good communication."

Krystal Nichols, RN



Krystal Nichols, RN, says learning and prioritizing patient care is what nursing is all about.



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CARING SPIRIT

RN's passion for behavioral health touches lives

By James Coburn, staff writer

Kris Harrison-Whitworth likes to meet her patients where they are in life. Some patients' behavioral health disorders have never been diagnosed before coming to the Autumn Life Center for Geriatric Behavioral Health, located within OU Health Edmond Medical Center.

"You let them know who you are and what you're going to do for them. You're going to take care of them and 'We're going to help you feel better,'" Harrison Whitworth said.

She has done a lot of geriatric and psychiatric nursing since her career began 23 years ago. She came to OU Health Edmond Medical Center 12 years ago, working her first five years in the long-term acute care (LTAC) unit. Harrison-Whitworth learned a lot there while caring for patients within the unit living with a variety of comorbidities.

She worked in a nursing home during nursing school and part time as a psychiatric agency nurse. Her nursing experience also included serving at Griffin Memorial Hospital in Norman. Her experience flourished in finding her dream job at OU Health Edmond Medical Center.

Autumn Life Center is an inpatient behavioral health program developed to meet the unique needs of mature adults, ages 55 and older. This geriatric psychiatry program addresses and seeks to relieve the suffering that occurs due to changes in emotional, mental, and behavioral wellness. Issues may include schizophrenia, bipolar, and dementia. They may have experienced incremental periods of sadness and grief that culminated into a deeper depression until being addressed at Autumn Life Center.

When referred by a physician, family members having difficulty controlling a loved one will often accompany their loved one with dementia to the center. The behavioral unit may provide medication adjustments.

"Especially in the geriatric population, some people are living on their own still and driving that shouldn't be," Harrison-Whitworth said. "Their memory is not good and they're not being safe on the road. A lot of families, if they don't see them often or see them rarely — a lot of times they see a huge change. But if they're around them, it's more of a gradual decline and they don't notice it as much. 'They will say, 'We go over and see mom' or 'We live next door.' That's how they try to handle things."

People living with bipolar, or schizophrenia may be at home taking their medicine as prescribed. The medicine helps them to feel good, and they decide to stop. This only exacerbates more problems.

The staff tries to separate elders living with major depression disorders from patients who are more agitated. Patients are separated into groups during the day. Sometimes a patient may sense something is not right with themselves but cannot quite figure out the problem," Harrison-Whitworth explained.



Kris Harrison-Whitworth, RN, respects the dignity of the patients she serves at the Autumn Life Center for Geriatric Behavioral Health, located within OU Health Edmond Medical Center.

"So, we test them up there every time they come in. A standard test gives you a good idea where they're at," she said.

That way the staff can share the results with family members to alert them that it may not be safe for their loved one to return home by themselves. The family may consider transferring their loved one to a memory center or nursing home with a dementia unit.

There have been moments with patients that have touched Harrison-Whitworth's life.

"I've fallen in love with a lot of my patients," she said. "You just get to know them. Even if they have memory issues, we get attached to them and they get attached to us."

Harrison-Whitworth likes learning what the patients did for a living.

"I think that's really important. That way you can have conversations and a lot of times their long-term memory is good. Their short-term isn't," she continued. "They can tell you all kinds of things. I'm very close to veterans. I just feel like anybody that has served our country deserves the highest care that we can give them. We still have a lot. We're talking Afghanistan, Iraq, and Agent Orange during the Gulf War. We still have patients from that, and they've been through a lot."

Several of the veterans live with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Suicide risk among veterans in the U.S. is 57 percent higher risk than those who haven't served. In 2021, there was an average of 17.5 veteran suicides per day — 6,392 in total, according to Cohen Veterans Bioscience.

Persons with PTSD are often misunderstood. And it is not good to tell someone with major depression or PTSD to snap out of it. Harrison Whitworth said it's amazing how guide dogs can help with PTSD. The Autumn Life Center had a therapy dog until the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020.

"Every time he would come up the patients loved him, and he loved the staff, too," Harrison-Whitworth said.

Studies have shown that dogs can lower their owners' blood pressure. They provide unconditional love.

"The families that come in a lot, they begin to trust you knowing you're going to take care of their mother or father, and they can feel good about it," she said.

Patience is essential for being a psychiatric nurse, Harrison-Whitworth said. You must pick your passion in nursing, she added.

Harrison-Whitworth knows the importance of family support. She and her husband, also a nurse, enjoy relaxing or playing with their dogs at home.



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REDLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PREPARES NURSING GRADUATES FOR WORKFORCE

A common desire
among nursing students
is to help others.



Redlands Community College nursing students gain valuable experience in the campus' simulation lab.

"I chose to pursue a career in nursing because of my innate desire to assist others in any way possible," said Kassidy Brinlee, a Redlands nursing student and a student ambassador. "Witnessing my grandmother's battle with dementia deeply impacted me and highlighted the importance of helping others facing similar challenges."

Redlands Community College in El Reno, Okla., gives these students the start toward a successful and fulfilling career in the health care field where they impact the lives of patients and families every day. With a 100% job placement rate, Redlands offers a two-year degree program that prepares graduates to successfully take the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) for licensure as a registered nurse and to enter the workforce immediately.

"The benefit of earning an associate degree in nursing at Redlands is that graduates are well-prepared for the licensure exam that will allow them to begin working quickly," said Diane Duffy, interim director of Redlands' Nursing Program. "Once they have completed this stage, they are able to focus on their career as a registered nurse or continue their education at a university to earn a bachelor's of nursing degree."

Redlands has two nursing

program options: the traditional RN program and a track for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Students who are enrolled in the LPN-to-RN cohort earn articulation credits in the first semester, allowing them to graduate in three semesters instead of four. This helps get them out of the classroom and into the community where they can do the most good.

Hollye Edmonds has taken a different path to the nursing field. After spending 15 years as a pre-k teacher, Edmonds decided to pursue a new career that still allows her to help others.

Returning to school can be daunting, but Edmonds has found a supportive environment at Redlands. "From the beginning, I was offered help and guidance from enrolling in courses to securing financial aid when needed and every area in between. Redlands has made the process of being a student easy and has mapped out clear pathways to success and supports their students on their journey."

Redlands is a solid, affordable choice for students because of the scholarships available as well as the personal attention and opportunities it provides. The college's partnerships with several area health facilities provide students with challenging, hands-on

experience during their clinical rotations.

"Fortunately, our location just outside of Oklahoma City gives our students the opportunity to serve in both rural and urban areas, exposing them to the different types of nursing care available and helping them figure out what is the best fit for them" Duffy said.

After spending a decade in pre-hospital health care, Jeremy Pool was ready to expand his experience with a greater focus on patient care. He had previously earned an associate degree from Redlands as well as other medical certifications, so he wanted to complete the college's nursing program.

"I find the staff very helpful and down to earth and my college credits transferred seamlessly here," Pool said. "The faculty goes above and beyond to make sure you have the tools and resources to succeed in the program. They are with you every step of the way to answer questions, address problems or concerns, and assist with test taking strategies and note taking."

With a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant from Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI) Part A to support outreach and retention efforts and additional funding to update campus

simulation labs, the Redlands Nursing Program is providing a high-quality learning experience led by dedicated and well-trained faculty.

"At Redlands, everyone is friendly, and the faculty is excited to be part of students' lives," said Duffy. "We are committed to helping our nursing students succeed, and our faculty and staff are dedicated to supporting them throughout their time in the program."

Pool agreed, saying "I feel the faculty I work with daily make an impact on my success in their own way. Professor Newell makes lectures and test prepping always engaging and interesting, while my success coach keeps me accountable of my work and gives me great advice on how to approach my test taking and time organization."

The five-year cooperative grant is designed for Native American and low-income students and is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the NASNTI program.

Visit www.redlandsc.edu/nursing/careers.php for more information and to apply for the program and scholarships. The scholarship application is due May 31.



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Raising Hip Dysplasia Awareness

Hip Dysplasia Awareness Month is observed globally every June, and INTEGRIS Health is dedicated to raising awareness about the signs, symptoms and treatment options for this often misunderstood orthopedic condition.

Understanding Hip Dysplasia

Hip dysplasia, also known as developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH), occurs when an infant’s hip socket does not fully cover the ball portion of the upper thighbone. This misalignment can cause the hip joint to become dislocated or prone to dislocation. The International Hip Dysplasia Institute states that one in 10 infants are born with some level of hip instability, while one in 100 babies are treated for actual hip dysplasia.

Hip dysplasia can also manifest during adolescence or adulthood, particularly in milder cases that were undetected earlier, and is often called acetabular dysplasia because the socket (acetabulum) is shallow and does not fully support the femoral head. Adult hip dysplasia is nine times more common than infantile hip dysplasia and is the most common cause of hip arthritis before the age of 50.



Recognizing the Symptoms

“Early diagnosis and intervention are key to preventing long-term complications associated with hip dysplasia,” says Thomas Hsing M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with INTEGRIS Health Medical Group Orthopedics in Edmond and Enid. “We encourage parents and individuals to be vigilant about the signs and seek medical advice if concerns arise.”

- Infants:** Uneven leg lengths, limited range of motion in one leg or asymmetrical skin folds on the thighs or buttocks.
- Children and teens:** A noticeable limp, hip instability or discomfort during physical activities.
- Adults:** Persistent groin pain, a sensation of the hip “catching” or “popping” and reduced range of motion.

While the exact causes are unknown, a combination of genetic, environmental and mechanical factors likely play a role. Risk factors include being born female, a family history of the condition, breech birth position and firstborn status.

Treatment and Recovery

Treatment strategies depend on the patient’s age and the severity of the condition.

Infants: Use of a Pavlik harness to hold the hips in the correct position, promoting proper joint development.

Older children and adults: Physical therapy to strengthen the surrounding muscles, pain management through medications and surgical interventions such as periacetabular osteotomy (PAO) to realign the hip socket.

Recovery times vary depending on the treatment or surgery, and the patient’s age.



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Infants who undergo open or closed reduction surgery must wear a body cast (also called a spike cast) around their lower torso and extremities for 12 to 18 weeks.


Older teenagers who undergo PAO do not need a cast and will be walking within a few days, but they will require crutches for several months to make sure they don't put too much weight on their hips and legs. Physical therapy will also be prescribed to improve strength, flexibility and range of motion. For adults, returning to normal activities or sports can take six to 12 months depending on the procedure and commitment to rehabilitation.

"Hip dysplasia is often misunderstood as a childhood-only condition, but it can cause significant problems later in life if not addressed," says Hsing. "Our goal is to ensure patients receive an accurate diagnosis and personalized care at any age to preserve joint health and prevent future complications."

At INTEGRIS Health Orthopedics, our fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeons and specialists across the state provide expert care, compassionate support and will work with you to create a personalized treatment plan tailored to your needs.

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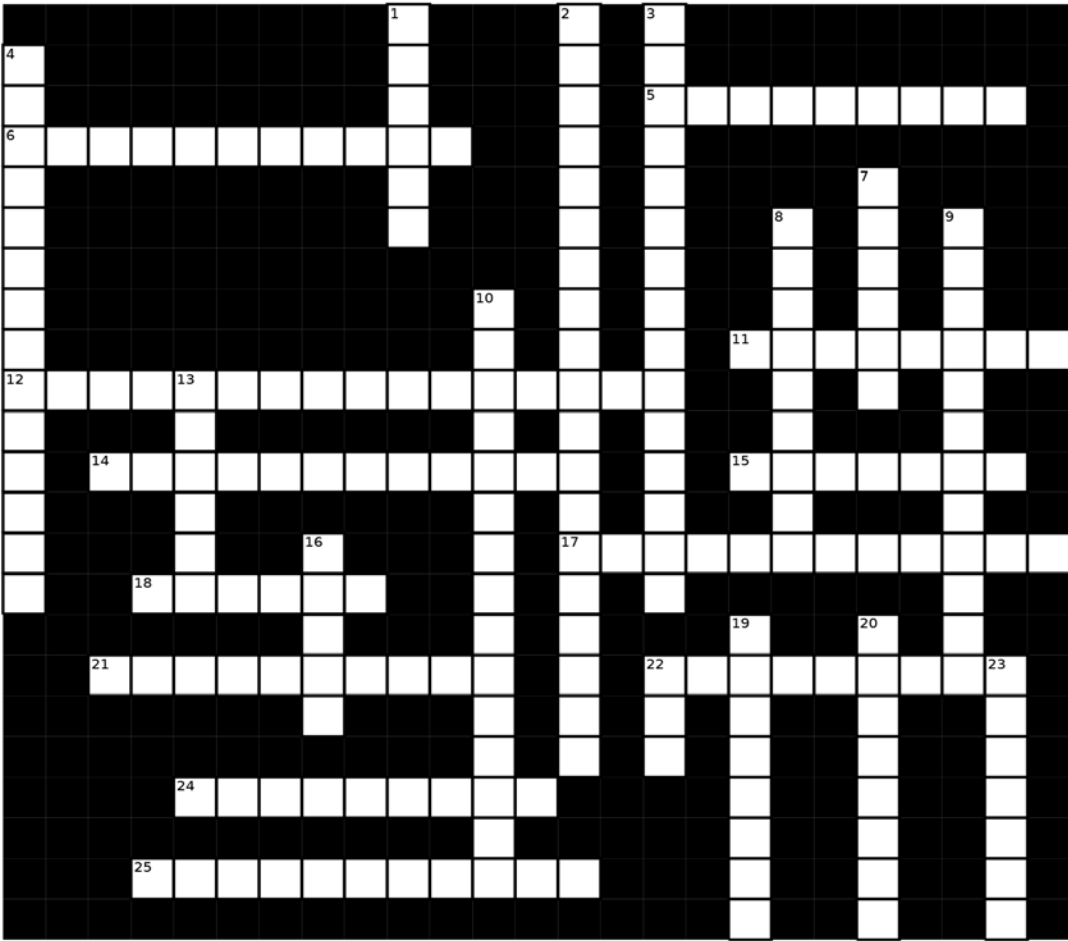
CROSSWORD: DIGESTIVE PHARMACOLOGY

Across

5. Classified as an antiemetic.
6. H2 histamine _____ are used for the treatment of Ulcers.
11. Side effects of long term use of these drugs include psychotic behaviors and stomach ulcers.
12. A common side effect of this classification is a dry mouth!
14. This type of laxative swells up and adds to the contents of the intestines.
15. Given to effectively treat diarrhea!
17. Reduces the risk of hemorrhage in Cirrhosis of the Liver.
18. Increases stomach and intestinal peristalsis therefore relieving reflux esophagitis.
21. A cation exchange resin used to treat hyperkalemia.
22. Example of a proton pump inhibitor used to treat ulcers.
24. Example of a bulk forming laxative.
25. Paregoric is used to treat diarrhea by inhibiting this.....

Down

1. Relieves intestinal spasms in the treatment of IBS
2. A classification of medications commonly used to treat IBS.
3. The generic name for Colace.
4. Given IM for the purpose of replacing B12 which is absent due to the lack of "intrinsic factor".
7. When treating nausea, it is best to give an antiemetic _____ the onset of nausea.
8. This laxative is used in the treatment of encephalopathy.
9. Required in adequate amts to insure the effectiveness of this classification..
10. The preferred medical treatment of active Crohn's disease with small intestinal involvement.
13. Example of a stool softener.
16. An example of an H2 histamine receptor antagonist.
19. Imodium, Lomotil and Kaopectate are used in the treatment of this....
20. When teaching your patient about this drug, it



is best to advise the patient to remain close to a bathroom!
22. Antacids are sometimes used in the treatment of this...

23. The only drug in the US approved for use in prevention of gastric ulcers caused by NSAIDS is...

Answers on page 14

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TALK

What do you think about the OKC Thunder winning the NBA championship?



"I think it is a great thing, it's about time. I think it will help our area grow even more than it already has."



Traci Workman, RN

"I think that's awesome. I'm excited to be alive during this time so I can tell my grandkids that I was around during this first win."



Bethany Witte, RN

"It's awesome. I was really excited and I was jumping up and down."



KC Khaki, RN

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Getting to Know Amber Nealy

Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Support Services, Cancer Division

Amber Nealy, DNP, R.N., NE-BC, recently took on the role of Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Supportive Services, Cancer Division at OU Health, bringing with her a deep connection to OU Health and a strong love for nursing. Her mother worked as a nurse in the emergency department of Oklahoma Children’s Hospital OU Health in the late 80s, and later worked at OU Health Physicians Family Medicine Clinic until retiring in 2020. Nealy followed in her mother’s footsteps and started working for OU Health in 2008.

From Learner to Leader

But Nealy’s path to OU Health started as a learner at the flagship academic health system. In high school, Nealy participated in a program through OU Health Sciences that helped students transition into a career in healthcare. While Nealy knew she wanted to work in healthcare, she wasn’t sure in which role. Initially her instructor recommended she consider becoming a surgeon, but Nealy knew that wasn’t what she wanted to do.

“In our program, we were shadowing physicians in the family medicine clinic, and we were able to watch minor procedures,” recalls Nealy. “A patient was having his ingrown toenail removed, and during the procedure, my best friend fainted and my brother thought the whole thing was cool. All I could think about was how the patient needed his pain to be managed better.”

For Nealy, it was a natural progression that she

would go from the health sciences program to college, and then onto a career with OU Health. She didn’t want to leave the state for college or work at another hospital. She knew she wanted to work at OU Health, just like her mother.

Nealy studied nursing at Langston University and started working as a nurse partner in the OU Health Inpatient Adult Medicine Specialty Unit in 2008. Since then, she has held various roles including as a clinical R.N., clinical supervisor, and clinical manager, and has also served as the director of operations in Adult Endoscopy. Nealy chaired the Nursing Ancillary and Advisory Council for Epic Implementation and participated in numerous other committees. She is a certified Nurse Executive by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

In May 2025, Nealy earned her doctorate through the OU Health Nursing Degree Accelerator Program, further solidifying her expertise and commitment to nursing excellence. The program, offered in partnership with the University of Oklahoma Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing, invests in the career development of OU Health nurses and advances healthcare in the state and beyond by establishing seamless academic progression pathways. After just six months of employment at OU Health, R.N.s and LPNs can further their education and career trajectory while receiving complete financial support through the OU College of Nursing.



Mother’s Day 2018 at OU Health



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Kara Rother Named Chief Nursing Officer for Mercy in Oklahoma City

Rother has 18 years of local experience as a nurse and health care executive

Kara Rother, a local nurse and health care executive with 18 years of experience, is Mercy's new top nurse in Oklahoma City.

Rother will lead 1,700 Mercy nurses in the Oklahoma City metro beginning July 21.

"It's the honor of my career to be entrusted to work with a team of such dedicated and compassionate nurses," said Rother. "I'm excited to work in a city I love serving patients who are my neighbors. Whether it's in our hospital or our clinics, Mercy nurses serve so many families here in Oklahoma City. Providing them with the best possible care is what motivates us."

About Rother

Rother, a registered nurse, most recently served as vice president and chief nursing officer of INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center.

She was the top candidate for Mercy's chief nursing officer position from a group of qualified applicants from across the country.

"It's exciting to bring someone with Kara's experience and leadership skills to such an important position on our team," said Bennett Geister, president of Mercy Oklahoma City Communities. "Whether they're at a Mercy clinic or hospital, patients know that nurses are true caregivers who have chosen a career of



service to others. Kara knows what it means to be a nurse and to lead them, and her history of improving patient care with outstanding employee satisfaction will benefit everyone who walks through our doors."

Rother is a native Oklahoman who earned an associate's degree in nursing from Oklahoma State University, and a bachelor's degree in nursing from Southwestern Oklahoma State University. She earned a master's degree in health care administration from Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences.

Rother has been an American Nurses Credentialing Center board-certified nurse executive for nine years.

She started her career as a post-anesthesia care unit nurse, rising to a management position within four years of full-time nursing. She had clinical director roles in multiple disciplines and was a nursing director of patient care services and assistant chief nurse officer before assuming her recent role at INTEGRIS Health in 2023.

Born in Okarche into the Eischen family of the synonymous bar and fried chicken restaurant, she's married with three sons. Through marriage she's also related to Blessed Stanley Rother. The Rother's are often traveling for youth sports or relaxing at Lake Eufaula.

About Mercy



Mercy, one of the 15 largest U.S. health systems and named the top large system in the U.S. for excellent patient experience by NRC Health, serves millions annually with nationally recognized care and one of the nation's largest and highest performing Accountable Care Organizations in quality and cost. Mercy is a highly integrated, multi-state health care system including 50

acute care and specialty (heart, children's, orthopedic and rehab) hospitals, convenient and urgent care locations, imaging centers and pharmacies. Mercy has over 1,000 physician practice locations and outpatient facilities, more than 5,000 physicians and advanced practitioners and more than 50,000 co-workers serving patients and families across Arkansas,

Illinois, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Mercy also has clinics, outpatient services and outreach ministries in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. In fiscal year 2023 alone, Mercy provided more than half a billion dollars of free care and other community benefits, including traditional charity care and unreimbursed Medicaid.

HEALING GRACE

RN provides peace and love

By James Coburn, staff writer

Bethany Witte, RN, sees God's hands at work during her service as an ambulatory surgery nurse at SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital-Midwest, she said. Witte does pre-op and post-op nursing including assisting with colonoscopies during her day shift.

"I get to be his hands and feet to spread His love and make people feel better," Witte said.

Her entire 24-year career of nursing has been spent at the Midwest City hospital she calls home.

"You know the doctors and nurses on the floor. It just feels right," she said. "Everybody's friendly and you know your people."

Witte's path to an Associate of Nursing degree included the Moore-Norman Technology Center, Oklahoma City Community College, and Rose State College in Midwest City. Her experience includes med/surg neurological nursing, and cardiology. In October she moved to day surgery.

The staff is united with great teamwork, Witte said. She likes the Christian based mission of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital-Midwest that she shares with patients who are receptive to prayer.

"It's nice to have that as well — to be there when they're scared — to be with them and talk with them," Witte said. "It's nice to meet with people and see people to make their day better."

She prepares patients for surgery, answers their questions, and gets their consent forms signed. Nurses empathize with patients fears and lets them know their anxiety is completely natural.

"I pray with them if they want you to pray for them," she continued. "Some want an encouraging word or an encouraging verse."

Witte sees that patients get the lab work they might need or an electrocardiogram before sending them to surgery. Upon their recovery the patient returns to Witte, who helps them get ready to return home.

Patients return feeling sleepy or wide-awake. But they are relieved their surgery is completed. A family member or friend might be with them to help them remember their discharge instructions as Witte explains what to watch for and all the things to do.

She generally sees three to five patients a day for surgery. On average she will assist with 12-18 patients there for an endoscopy.

She recalled a recent patient whose surgery was delayed beyond her shift. Witte was about to go home when she learned it was time for his procedure. So, she decided to stay.

"He was so scared, just super nervous and no peace," she explained.



Bethany Witte, RN, puts her hands to work while believing in the healing presence of God at SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital-Midwest.

"I was able to talk with him pray with him. He was from Korea, and I had time to write a phrase in Korean for him. I wrote a card and gave it to him. That cheered him up and made him feel more peace. It turned out he was a Korean pastor."

She saw him the next morning after his overnight stay. She gave him a devotional book about Jesus Christ and a book about anxiety.

"Things I felt the Lord was leading me to give him," Witte said. "I

“I pray with them if they want me to pray for them. Some want an encouraging word or an encouraging verse.”

Bethany Witte, RN

stayed in contact with them and they brought me flowers later. They told me how much that meant to them. You could tell God had his hand in it, and that I was supposed to help him and be able to make his day awesome.”

Such experiences in life carry over throughout her day. Witte said it lets her know that the little things she can do matter more than she may have known.

“When you get word back that it was monumental to them or just so important, life changing or touching, that makes you keep going and realize your little words of encouragement are bigger things to them,” she said.

Her experiences influence her life when she goes out in the community by being bold and unafraid to reach out to people.

“I try to encourage them and pray with them — listen to them and empathize — because it matters more than you know. Try to be there for them because everyone has something going on that we don’t realize,” she said.

She’s a fan of the Oklahoma City Thunder and loves that they won the NBA championship. At home she relaxes by watching movies and hanging out with family, including her two children, ages 17, 18, and 21. Her daughter’s best friend is thinking about a nursing career.

“She’d be great,” Witte said. “I love it, it’s a great job. There are so many opportunities in different fields. It’s awesome.”

SSM Health has been supportive in her career by paying for her education to obtain an RN license.

“I do appreciate where we’re at, that we have the supplies and resources and staff that we need,” she said. “I don’t feel like it’s all about money where I work. Money is a factor in any job, but it doesn’t feel like it’s driven that way. So, that’s very nice. You just want to care for the people.”



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SENIOR NEWS & LIVING

OKC Metro Nurse Honor Guard Seeks New Members

"We are nurses who volunteer our time to pay tribute to nurses at their time of death by performing the Nightingale Tribute and Last Call to Duty at the funeral or memorial service," said Debbie Dahl, RN. "This service is steeped in tradition and officially releases the nurse from their nursing duties. There is never a charge to the family for our services." We are a non-profit organization staffed by working and retired nurses who volunteer their time to honor our nursing colleagues. Donations are accepted and used to purchase lanterns, roses, and other items needed to perform the service.



"We saw the need to provide memorial services for the many nurses who lived and worked in the OKC area," said Staci Branch, RN. "We are hoping to get 30 members to join us and help perform duties for funerals."

If you are interested in the OKC Metro Nurse Honor Guard, new members can sign up at: <https://forms.gle/MvpsWRtbGRav1xvSA>

Or by contacting:

Deanne Branch, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, CNE 405-833-0786

Staci Branch, BSN, RN, CIC 405-816-3157

Debbie Dahl, MSN, RN, CIC 405-623-9888



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