



# 'Nursing's Biggest Fan'

Magnet coordinators: The ambassadors of nursing excellence

By Beth Puliti

Just 8 percent of hospitals in the U.S. have received recognition through the Magnet Recognition Program, the “highest and most prestigious international distinction a healthcare organization can receive for nursing excellence and quality patient care,” notes the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

Demonstrating outstanding outcomes is essential to achieving Magnet designation. Therefore, Magnet organizations are expected to lead the way in quality patient care and professionalism, creating a culture of excellence that attracts and retains highly skilled caregivers.

Many organizations seeking Magnet designation create a position and hire a Magnet program director (MPD), or Magnet coordinator, while other organizations assign MPD functions within another job description. Either way, the position reports to and works closely with the organization's chief nursing officer, helping to lead the effort toward Magnet designation or re-designation.

ADVANCE spoke with several MPDs in the region to glean more information about their role and their relationship to nursing staff.

## The Application Process

The process of applying for Magnet designation is thorough and lengthy, demanding widespread participation within the organization, stated Catherine K. Madigan, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, associate chief nursing officer and Magnet initiative co-chair, UNC Hospitals, Chapel Hill, NC.

“First, hospitals need to perform a self-assessment using Magnet criteria to determine if they

meet all of the standards for application. If so, they need to compile a written document, covering a 2-year period of time, that shows how they meet each of the Magnet forces. Once this is finished, they submit it to ANCC for review,” she explained.

If the document is accepted, the organization will then be scheduled for a site visit. The same surveyors who have read the document will visit the hospital for about 3-5 days (depending on the size of the organization) to clarify, verify and amplify the document based on what is observed.

“The team approach in reaching Magnet is essential, and everyone working toward the same goal of excellence in practice is a very rewarding element within Magnet organizations,” said Craig Luzinski, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, director of ANCC's Magnet Recognition Program.

It's a circular process: Magnet hospitals receive the designation because they have developed practice environments for nurses that have opportunities for staff involvement via shared governance models, advancement via professional advancement ladders and opportunities for all members of the healthcare team to work together collaboratively for superior patient care.

## Benefits of Magnet Recognition

With healthcare reform, consumers are increasingly relying on external validation through programs such as the ANCC Magnet designation to define hospitals where they will receive quality patient care. Additionally, studies have shown hospitals with Magnet accreditation have increased retention, as well as improved patient care, safety

**MAGNET PROUD:** Tanya Lott, RN, Magnet program director (left); Pennie Peralta, MHA, BSN, RN, NEA-BC, vice president of nursing; and Pat Marquis, nursing administration, at Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital, proudly show off their Magnet Crystal and plaque.

*courtesy Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital*

and satisfaction, stated Nimisha Patel, MHA, Magnet coordinator at UNC Hospitals.

“Magnet facilities have environments that foster nurse retention and satisfaction, patient satisfaction, physician satisfaction and excellence in patient care, leading to better patient outcomes compared to national benchmarks,” Daniel Kelly, MBA, BSN, RN, chief nursing officer at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center, Houston, concurred.

“It has given our nurses an increased sense of pride in their hospital and the care they provide,” added Tanya Lott, RN, MPD at Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital, and education specialist at Roper St. Francis Healthcare, Charleston, SC. “Magnet hospitals are not perfect, but we do have structures and processes in place to identify and create new ways of problem solving, teamwork and innovation to create the best environment for our patients to receive care and for our staff to work.”

## Role of the Magnet Coordinator

The MPD, or Magnet coordinator, is the key liaison between the organization and the Magnet Program Office. Individuals in this role work with the Magnet staff to make sure they are current with updates and correct interpretation of the Sources of Evidence. Most importantly, they guide their organization through the Magnet journey. Though each facility adopts a slightly different interpretation of this role, the MPD is the resident expert on all things Magnet, stated Marti Wilson, MS, RN, Magnet project manager at Emory Healthcare, Atlanta.

“He or she is often the most knowledgeable about the details of the Magnet program and leads the organization through the processes of application, document preparation, site visit preparation and celebration when designation is achieved,” Wilson explained.

After Magnet designation, the MPD must ensure the yearly requirements and interim report are submitted to the ANCC on time. He or she also encourages continued growth and innovation.

Sandy George, BSN, RN, Magnet coordinator at Shands Jacksonville Medical Center in Jacksonville, FL, considers herself a liaison between the bedside nurse and executive leadership.

“While executive leadership at my organization is very visible, it can be intimidating as a staff nurse to approach them. I develop a rapport with

## Magnet Recognition ► ADVANCE EXTRA!



**ALL BOXED UP:** The Magnet team at Emory University Orthopaedics & Spine Hospital filled four boxes with written documents to send to Magnet appraisers. The team included Carmen Sanquirico (left); Ray Storey; Polly Willis, MS, RN, PCCN; Pam Sapp, MSN, RN, OCNS-BC; Marti Wilson, MS, RN; Donald Miller; Germaine Rouser, MN, RN, CCRN; Roberta Nichols-Covin, MSN, RN, CNOR; and June Connor, MN, RN, NE-BC. *courtesy Emory Healthcare*

bedside staff, physicians and execs, and work within all levels to disseminate and communicate,” George said.

One of the roles Lott has enjoyed the most is mentoring other hospitals on the journey. ANCC formally encourages Magnet facilities to provide this mentorship.

“Magnet recognition is all about the promotion of nursing excellence and when you love nursing, you want to see this level of excellence spread throughout every hospital,” Lott said.

She noted that people in this role are viewed as the Magnet expert, but also as nursing’s biggest fans.

“I view my role as one of support and encouragement, always promoting interdisciplinary teamwork and encouraging nurses in their professional development so our patients can always receive the best care possible,” she said.

### Strategies to Encourage Staff

Magnet coordinators can use a variety of strategies to instill excitement and enthusiasm, as well as motivate staff throughout the organization.

Madigan advised holding Magnet fairs with games/giveaways; designating “Magnet champions” to attend weekly meetings and provide a link to staff; creating “brag books”; hosting meetings with prizes and small gifts; and communicating why this initiative is important.

Lott remarked that the Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital Magnet champion group was crucial to motivating and encouraging staff about the initiative.

“For us, there were no other Magnet organizations around; therefore, it was a challenge to help our staff understand what the Magnet Recognition Program is and why it is such an achievement for our staff and our patients,” she explained.

Jody Collins, MSN, RN, nursing excellence and Magnet program manager at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital, Woodlands, TX, added that Magnet coordinators should share the knowledge and empower staff to have a voice.

“What they do every day is what makes this organization a Magnet facility,” Lott concluded. ■

**Beth Puliti** is a frequent contributor to *ADVANCE*.



### More on Magnet

Hear what two Magnet appraisers have to say about the benefits and future of achieving Magnet recognition at [www.advanceweb.com/NurseSouth](http://www.advanceweb.com/NurseSouth).

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