

# UHN Nursing Annual Report

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2024/25

# Impacting LIVES

## A Message from Pam Hubley, VP Health Disciplines & Chief Nurse Executive

### Welcome to UHN’s 2024/25 Nursing Annual Report

Dear colleagues,

I am so thrilled to share with you some of the amazing achievements across UHN Nursing this past academic year. I continue to be so inspired and impressed by the smart, capable, compassionate, creative, and dynamic nursing workforce at UHN. Together, we have continued to stabilize the nursing workforce, are focusing on retention programs that support nurses to thrive, and remain engaged in the implementation of the Nursing Strategy. This work enables us to co-create healthy workplaces, innovative career pathways, and unique opportunities that reflect excellence and dedication to our mission across the diverse settings that make up UHN.

Please enjoy this issue of celebration and take pride in all that your colleagues continue to do to improve care outcomes, educate the next generation of health professionals, and engage in scholarship that showcases the many impacts nurses regularly make in the healthcare system.

Thank you for being valued colleagues and leaders making a difference every day.

Warm regards and deep thanks to all of you.



Pam



Pam Hubley  
Vice President, Health Disciplines  
& Chief Nursing Executive

# Nursing STORIES

## Reigniting Shared Governance: The Relaunch of the UHN Professional Nursing Council

In January 2024, University Health Network (UHN) proudly relaunched its Professional Nursing Council (PNC), marking a pivotal step in advancing the UHN Nursing Strategy.

This revitalized structure is designed to elevate the voices of point-of-care nurses, foster leadership development, and strengthen shared governance across the organization.

The Corporate PNC, which meets monthly, brings together co-chairs from each Program PNC to discuss emerging challenges, quality improvement opportunities, and strategic initiatives. This structure enables a bi-directional flow of information, ensuring that both local and organizational priorities are addressed in a balanced and collaborative way.

Shared governance in nursing is a leadership and organizational model that emphasizes shared decision-making and collaboration between nurse leaders and front-line nurses, empowering nurses to have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their practice and patient care. It promotes decentralized leadership, where authority and accountability are distributed among those directly involved in patient care rather than centralized in higher management.

The relaunch has already sparked meaningful engagement. Nurses across UHN have embraced the opportunity to participate in councils, many

for the first time. The diversity of voices – ranging from novice to experienced nurses, Registered Nurses (RN) to Registered Practical Nurses (RPN) – has enriched discussions and fostered a culture of inclusivity and innovation.

Nurses on the council have shared ideas across programs, leading to projects such as a pilot project on oral health in General Internal Medicine (GIM), the development of wound carts, mental health awareness, and enhancements to EPIC documentation. The council co-chairs also lead the DAISY Awards program, which recognizes nurses for the impact of their work.

### Leading the Way: Meet the co-chairs

In June 2024, UHN announced the first two co-chairs of the Corporate PNC: Kimberley McLeese (RN, TGH Emergency Department) and Maja Cardinale (RN, PMH Ambulatory Clinics). Together with Pam Hubley, Vice President of Health Professions and Chief Nursing Executive, they are leading the charge in shaping the future of nursing governance at UHN.

*“Serving as co-chair of the UHN Corporate Professional Nursing Council has been a transformative experience. It deepened my sense of purpose as a nurse and empowered me to champion professional excellence across our organization. One of the most powerful and meaningful aspects has been witnessing nursing colleagues come together – across programs and disciplines – to collaborate, exchange ideas, and support one another in driving forward innovative practice. A standout moment for me was when the GIM program chair shared how their unit created a wound cart, which inspired the Schroeder program to implement a similar initiative. That kind of cross-program knowledge -sharing not only improves patient care but also builds a culture of continuous learning and camaraderie.”*

– Kimberley McLeese



*I took a chance on this role not knowing what to expect, but it opened my eyes to a solution-focused way of thinking that has reshaped how I show up—both personally and professionally. It’s been incredibly rewarding to feel truly seen and heard, with ideas not just welcomed but genuinely uplifted and supported. I’m grateful to the leaders and point-of-care nurses who embraced us with open arms and helped create a space where we show up not only for each other, but also for ourselves. One of the most meaningful parts has been introducing mindfulness practices at the start of each meeting—like mindful stretches and box breathing—and seeing how openly the group engaged, with some even incorporating them into their own councils. I love witnessing the excitement and “aha” moments that happen during our discussions or through the exchange of ideas around the table—it’s in those moments that growth happens. This experience has reminded me that when we come together with openness, curiosity, and heart, we not only build stronger teams—we create a more compassionate future for nursing, one that ultimately leads to better patient outcomes.*

– Maja Cardinale



### Looking Ahead

The relaunch of the PNC is more than a structural change – it’s a cultural shift. It reflects UHN’s commitment to empowering nurses, fostering leadership, and ensuring that the voices of those at the bedside are heard at the boardroom table.

As the councils continue to evolve, they will play a vital role in shaping nursing practice, improving patient care, and building a resilient and connected nursing workforce & community across UHN.

## From Internationally Educated Nurse to Clinical Nurse Specialist: A Journey of Growth and Resilience

When Lina Al Wattar joined UHN in October 2024, she brought with her a wealth of international experience and a deep commitment to patient care. Today, she serves as a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) for the Melanoma Disease Site at UHN's Princess Margaret Cancer Centre – a role she stepped into in May 2025 after beginning her UHN journey as an Internationally Educated Nurse (IEN) in the ambulatory breast and melanoma clinics.

Her path to this role is a testament to perseverance, adaptability, and the power of mentorship.

With a Master's degree in Nursing Administration and Management from the American University of Beirut, and prior experience as an Oncology Nurse Coordinator at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, her decision to pursue nursing was driven by a profound desire to support patients through their most vulnerable moments.

"I've always found meaning in being part of a patient's care journey," Lina shares. "Oncology, in particular, drew me because of the resilience and strength I see in the patients and families we care for."

Transitioning into Canada's healthcare system brought both excitement and challenges. Despite her extensive oncology background, adapting to new clinical workflows and interprofessional dynamics required time and learning.

*"Be patient with yourself, stay open to learning, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Build relationships, seek mentorship, and embrace every opportunity to grow. Your experience is valuable – believe in your skills, and know that your journey brings a unique and important perspective to patient care."*

- Lina Al Wattar

"I was fortunate to be part of a supportive team that helped make the transition smoother," she says.

As an IEN, she faced the dual challenge of adjusting to a new professional and social culture. "It took intentional effort to build confidence and find my voice within a new environment," she reflects.

Support systems played a crucial role. UHN's onboarding process, mentorship from experienced nurses, and the camaraderie of her colleagues in the ambulatory clinics were instrumental. She also participated in the pilot of UHN's IEN Pathway Program, which provided structured support, resources, and learning opportunities tailored to IENs.

Sarah Rotstein, Advanced Practice Nurse Educator, was a key support for Lina. Sarah shared her approach for supporting IENs: "I think with any new hire, we need to assess the learning needs



Left: Sarah Rotstein, APNE  
Right: Lina Al Wattar, CNS

and gaps. With IENs it's important to consider not only their clinical backgrounds and expertise, but also the healthcare systems they have worked and trained in. I think it's best to not assume what people might know or understand, [and] instead create an environment when questions are welcomed and supported."

Lina's progression from RN to CNS was fueled by a proactive mindset. "I approached my role with a willingness to learn, remained flexible and was excited to tackle new challenges," she explains. By seeking feedback, building interprofessional relationships, and embracing continuous learning, she positioned herself for advancement.

To other IENs beginning their careers in Canada, she offers heartfelt advice: "Be patient with yourself, stay open to learning, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Build relationships, seek mentorship, and embrace every opportunity to grow. Your experience is valuable – believe in your skills, and know that your journey brings a unique and important perspective to patient care."

# UHN Nursing Strategy: MID-POINT UPDATE

## Designing Our Future Together

As we reach the midpoint of our five-year Nursing Strategy (2023–2028), it’s a moment to reflect on the progress we’ve made and the momentum we’re building. Co-created with nurses across UHN, the strategy was born from a shared vision: to empower nurses to thrive, lead, and innovate in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

The Nursing Strategy has four key elements: Adapt and Transform, Develop and Grow, Advance and Celebrate, and Innovate and Lead. We have made significant progress on all four, transforming Nursing at UHN.

One of the cornerstones of our strategy implementation so far has been the relaunch of the Professional Nursing Council in January 2024. This revitalized structure has elevated the voices of point-of-care nurses, fostered leadership development, and strengthened shared governance across UHN. Monthly meetings of the Corporate PNC bring together co-chairs from each Program PNC to address challenges, share ideas, and drive strategic initiatives.

To recognize and celebrate nurses, UHN launched the DAISY Awards, an international

award to recognize and celebrate nurses across the organization and in all nursing roles. Several awards have already been given over the past year and we look forward to celebrating many more.

The CAP Fellowship Program continues to expand and provide an opportunity for point-of-care nurses to lead a Quality Improvement project aligned with program and organizational priorities. This program has not only led to excellent work by the fellows, but has strengthened the leadership skills of participants, many of whom have moved into new roles. The CAP Research Grants program was also relaunched in 2025, which provides funding for nurses and health professionals to lead a research project, providing another way for nurses to create new knowledge and advance the profession.

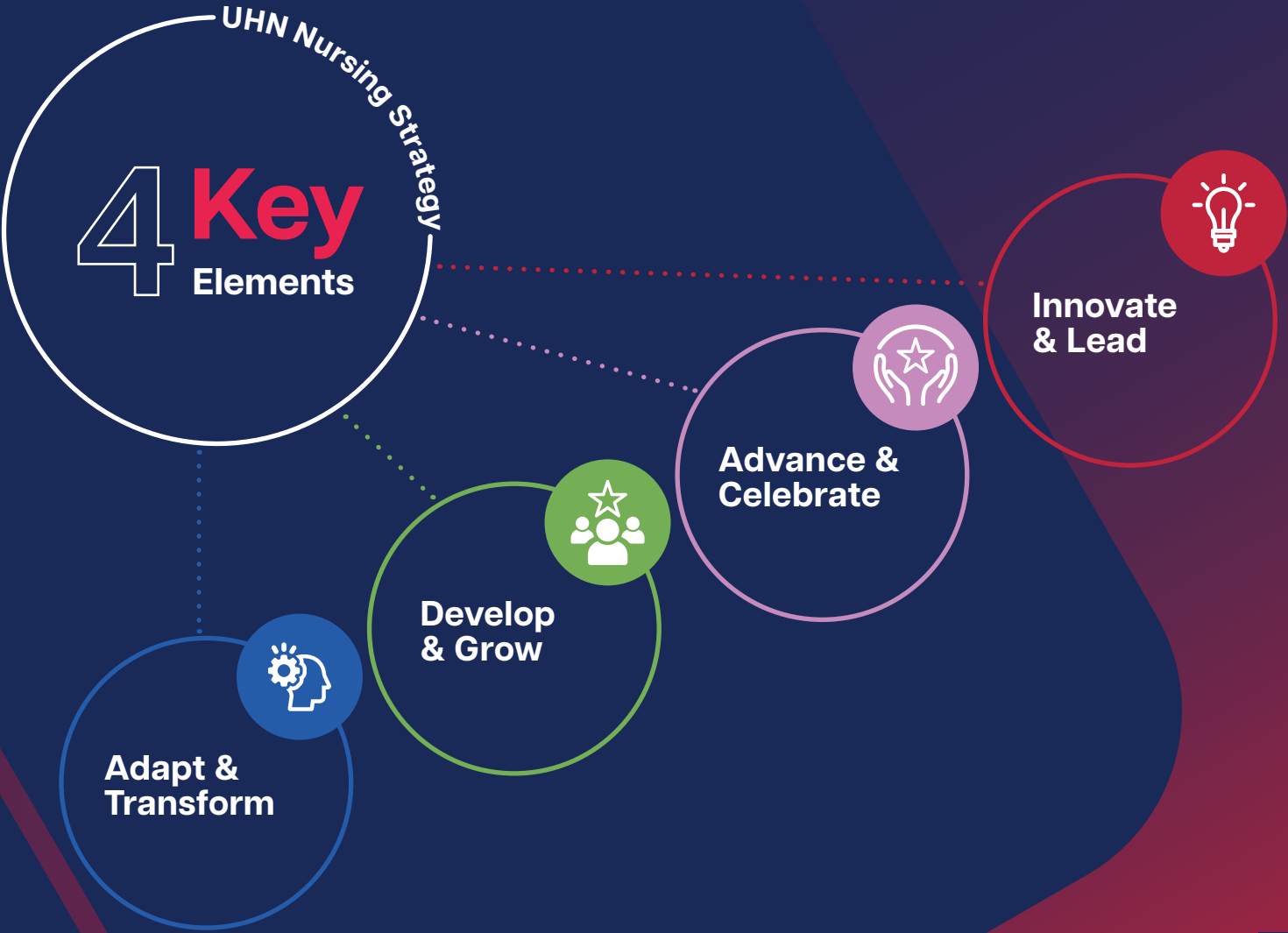
To support novice nurses and Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN), we have a number of Ministry-supported programs we are continuing or have implemented. We continue to participate in the New Graduate Guarantee (NGG) program to provide an extended orientation period as new nurses transition into practice. In 2023, we

launched the Clinical Scholar Program, which provides at-the-bedside support for nurses on several units, while also leveraging our experienced nurses knowledge and wisdom. We have also developed UHN’s IEN Pathway Program and participation in the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership (SPEP), which have been instrumental in supporting internationally educated nurses.

UHN’s nursing turnover has been reduced significantly since 2023, and nursing vacancies across the enterprise have stabilized. While this is encouraging, we will continue to work together to advance our Nursing Strategy and continue

to focus on creating a healthy workplace – one that inspires hope, meaning, and professional growth. We will continue to give nurses a voice with our shared governance structures, support leadership development at all levels, foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and advance evidence-informed practice and scholarship.

This midpoint update reflects a strategy in motion – one that is responsive, inclusive, and bold. As we look ahead, we remain committed to co-creating a future where nurses lead with purpose, innovate with courage, and thrive in dynamic, diverse teams.



# ADVANCING Excellence in Nursing Practice

## West Park Healthcare Centre's BPSO Journey

Since its designation as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) in 2006 by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), UHN's West Park Healthcare Centre has remained steadfast in its commitment to evidence-informed practice and fostering a healthy work environment.

This recognition marks the Centre's dedication to improving patient care through the implementation of RNAO's best practice guidelines (BPGs).

BPSOs are selected through a rigorous proposal process and represent a dynamic partnership with RNAO. These organizations are tasked with implementing and evaluating BPGs to enhance clinical decision-making and drive quality improvement. At West Park, this approach is deeply integrated across all levels of the organization, making RNAO guidelines a cornerstone of care excellence.

Since becoming a BPSO, West Park has successfully implemented a wide range of BPGs, including:

- Pressure Injury Management: Risk Assessment, Prevention, and Treatment
- Delirium, Dementia, and Depression in Older Adults: Assessment and Care
- Pain: Prevention, Assessment and Management
- A Proactive Approach to Bladder and Bowel Management in Adults
- End-of-Life Care During the Last Days and Hours
- Vascular Access
- Supporting Adults Who Anticipate or Live with an Ostomy
- Preventing and Managing Violence in the Workplace

In 2020, West Park began a strategic collaboration with partners in the North West Toronto Ontario Health Team (NWT OHT) to pursue RNAO BPSO OHT status. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership successfully implemented three additional BPGs by 2024:

- Person and Family Centred Care
- Preventing Falls and Reducing Injury from Falls
- Transitions in Care

**This culminated in the official recognition of West Park and its NWT OHT partners as a BPSO OHT in June 2024.**

Continuing its commitment to inclusive and equitable care, West Park is currently working to implement the "Embracing Cultural Diversity in Health Care: Developing Cultural Competence" BPG. This initiative reflects the Centre's dedication to fostering culturally competent care across its teams.

The implementation of BPGs at West Park is grounded in social movement science, promoting knowledge acquisition and sustained practice change. The BPG Implementation Committee, composed of interprofessional team members, plays a pivotal role in this effort. Central to the success of these initiatives are the BPG Champions – clinical team members who serve as change agents and advocate for best practices within their units.

# UHN Nurses Share Innovations on Global Stage at ICN Helsinki 2025

Two nurses from the UHN recently showcased their groundbreaking work at the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress held in Helsinki, Finland, in June 2025. Emily Puddicombe and Elaine Didiano represented UHN with pride, presenting on topics that highlight the evolving roles and educational strategies in nursing.

## Empowering Novice Nurses Through Non-Technical Skills

For Emily Puddicombe, a Clinical Nurse Educator in the Operating Room (OR) at UHN’s Toronto Western Hospital, the ICN Congress was an opportunity to share her passion for teaching and advancing knowledge in perioperative nursing. Her presentation, titled “Accommodating Learning Needs for Novice Nurses with the use of the SPLINTS tool,” focused on enhancing non-technical skills such as communication, teamwork, task management, and situational awareness – critical components for optimal patient care.

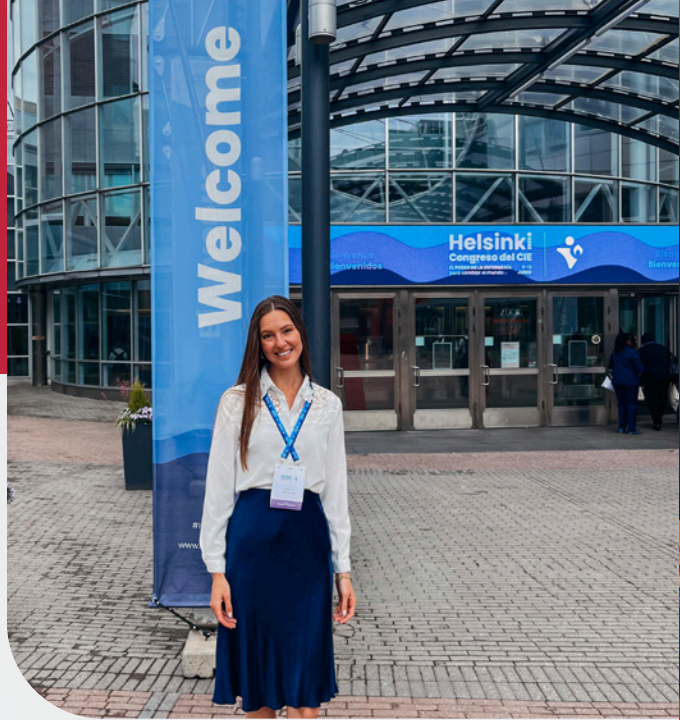
Emily’s journey to the global stage was supported by her manager, Rose Puopolo, and fueled by her experiences with UHN’s Emerging Leaders Program and multiple Krembil Nursing Awards. “I felt so privileged to represent this project,

the Krembil Foundation, and UHN on stage in Helsinki,” she shared. The conference broadened her perspective, exposing her to global healthcare innovations like melanoma prevention strategies in Australia and simulation-based learning models. “It was a humbling experience that inspired me to bring fresh ideas and a more global mindset to my practice.”

## Showcasing the Clinical Scholar Program

Advanced Practice Nurse Educator Elaine Didiano presented UHN’s implementation of the Clinical Scholar Program, a network-wide initiative designed to support novice nurses, Internationally Educated Nurses, and those transitioning to new practice areas. Elaine’s presentation was part of the “Emerging Roles in Nursing” theme and highlighted the program’s success in fostering staff satisfaction and professional growth.

Elaine’s team – including Claudia Grande, Sarah McDermid-Flabbi, Ian Alagadan, and Karelin Martina – collaboratively developed the abstract for submission. “Presenting at ICN was one of the most nerve-racking but amazing opportunities of my career,” Elaine said. She emphasized the importance of learning from global nursing



Emily Puddicombe, Clinical Nurse Educator



Elaine Didiano, APNE

leaders, especially those innovating with limited resources.

The conference also offered Elaine insights into pressing global issues such as workforce stabilization, the integration of artificial intelligence in nursing, and the health impacts of climate change. “The biggest takeaway was the power of nurses to create change and impart their expertise across diverse healthcare settings.”

## Advice for Aspiring Presenters

Both Emily and Elaine encouraged fellow nurses to pursue international presentation opportunities. Emily advised, “Let your passion for your project shine through – authentic enthusiasm is contagious.” Elaine added, “Don’t be afraid to try something new. There’s a wealth of experience at UHN – ask for help and guidance if the process is new to you.”

Their experiences at ICN Helsinki 2025 underscore the value of sharing local innovations on a global stage and the transformative impact of international collaboration in nursing.

*“It was a humbling experience that inspired me to bring fresh ideas and a more global mindset to my practice.”*

**- Emily Puddicombe**

# Specialized Dementia Unit Embarks on Stellar Certification Journey

When the Canadian Nursing Association (CNA) invited UHN’s Toronto Rehab’s Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU) to pursue Stellar Certification, the leadership team immediately said ‘yes.’

They were eager to embrace the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to enhancing nursing satisfaction and care delivery.

The CNA Stellar Certification recognizes workplace excellence in healthcare, in supporting nurses, boosting job satisfaction, and ensuring workplace safety and professional development.

The CNA identified the SDU as a candidate, due to the unit’s skilled, diverse nursing staff and expertise in managing the complex behavioural and the psychiatric needs of their geriatric inpatient population.

Seeing an opportunity to further enhance their practices, the unit’s Program Services Manager, Manager of Professional Practice, Advanced Practice Nursing Educator, and Advanced Practice Leader all enthusiastically joined in to lead the certification efforts starting in the fall of 2024.



Toronto Rehab Specialized Dementia Unit, Staff and Leadership

For the SDU, the certification process involved supporting nurses’ attendance at wellness activities offered during shifts, and integrating the BRITE (Building Resilience within Institutions Together with Employees) program into daily huddles. They also evaluated nurse-to-patient ratios to reduce burnout, and plan for 10 to 25 per cent of staff to achieve Gerontology Nursing certification within four years.

In April 2025, Toronto Rehab’s Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU) was awarded the Gold Stellar Certification with Excellent Standing – the highest possible recognition – by the Canadian Nurses Association. This prestigious honour makes UHN the first acute care hospital in Canada to achieve this distinction, reflecting TeamUHN’s unwavering dedication to enhancing nursing satisfaction and excellence in care delivery.

# UPDATE from the Office of Scholarship & Innovation

In November 2024, Dr. Alyssa Indar commenced her role as Director, Scholarship & Innovation in Collaborative Academic Practice.

A key priority in this role has been strategic work to elevate health professions scholarship across UHN. Promoting scholarship is a critical component of multi-pronged approaches to ensuring that our nursing workforce can envision long-term careers at UHN – in alignment with the Develop and Grow strategic direction of our UHN Nursing Strategy.

Through purposeful engagement with nurses, health professions and leadership, Dr. Indar has initiated dialogue to explore strategies to:

1. Shine the light on existing health professions-led scholarship, and
2. Co-develop practical ways to support engagement in research, quality improvement and academic writing.

Based on the insights from these discussions, we are preparing to launch the Scholarship Action Plan (SAP). The SAP will serve as framework to nurture a strong, foundational culture of nursing and health professions-led scholarship at UHN, with strategies tailored to the unique needs of UHN nurses, depending on career stage, designation and professional aspirations. Stay tuned for more developments that serve to support nurses in embodying the role of “scholar”, while importantly contributing to the domains of practice, education, leadership, research and policy.

# Strengths-Based NURSING & Healthcare Leadership

Strengths-Based Nursing & Healthcare is both a philosophy and a value-driven approach to guide clinicians, leaders, and educators.

Strengths-Based Nursing and Healthcare (SBNH) aims to transform the healthcare system by humanizing healthcare through knowledgeable and compassionate care.

Building on the Strength-Based Nursing framework, two Strengths-Based Nursing and Healthcare-Leadership (SBNH-L) retreats occurred in May 2025. These retreats brought together past participants from the SBNH-L sessions to reflect on their experiences and celebrate their progress. The goal was to co-design strategies for broader adoption of strength-based approaches within UHN. The Community of Practice (COP), consisting of leaders and mentors, proposed various strategies that can impact individual leaders, specific units or programs, and the broader network.

Guided by the SBNH-L Capabilities Framework (Hubley et al., 2024), participants identified several actionable activities focused on promoting the spread of SBNH-L within the network. A total of 32 individuals voted on their preferred options.

**Three main categories emerged from the list of strategies:**

1. Leader’s individual practice
2. Unit/program activities led by leaders
3. Network-level strategies to facilitate spread and scale

An action plan has been developed as a result. It will include the development of a toolkit for educators to run sessions, create a resource hub of materials, grow the SBNH-L facilitator team to deliver sessions, and identify ways

to highlight and showcase this work across the organization.

Strength-Based Nursing and Healthcare-Leadership will continue to spread across the organization and build upon our strengths as nurses and leaders. Look out for more coming to your local areas!

# NURSING PROFILES

## Impact Beyond UHN

### Leading with Purpose:

A Conversation with a Nurse Leader Shaping the Future of Nursing in Ontario

**As a Nurse Manager at UHN’s Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Outpatient Cardiac Clinics, Cardiac Registry, and Medly program, Dawn Donaldson brings a wealth of experience and passion to both clinical care and professional leadership.**

For the past several years, Dawn has brought this beyond the walls of UHN, holding successive leadership roles with the Nursing Leadership Network of Ontario (NLN), from Secretary to President, and now Past President.

As an interest group of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO), NLN works across the province to support and advocate for nurse leaders at all levels, from the bedside to the executive table, and develop nursing leaders of tomorrow.

Dawn’s journey with NLN began with a simple suggestion from a director: get involved beyond the hospital and reconnect with the broader nursing community. That advice sparked a

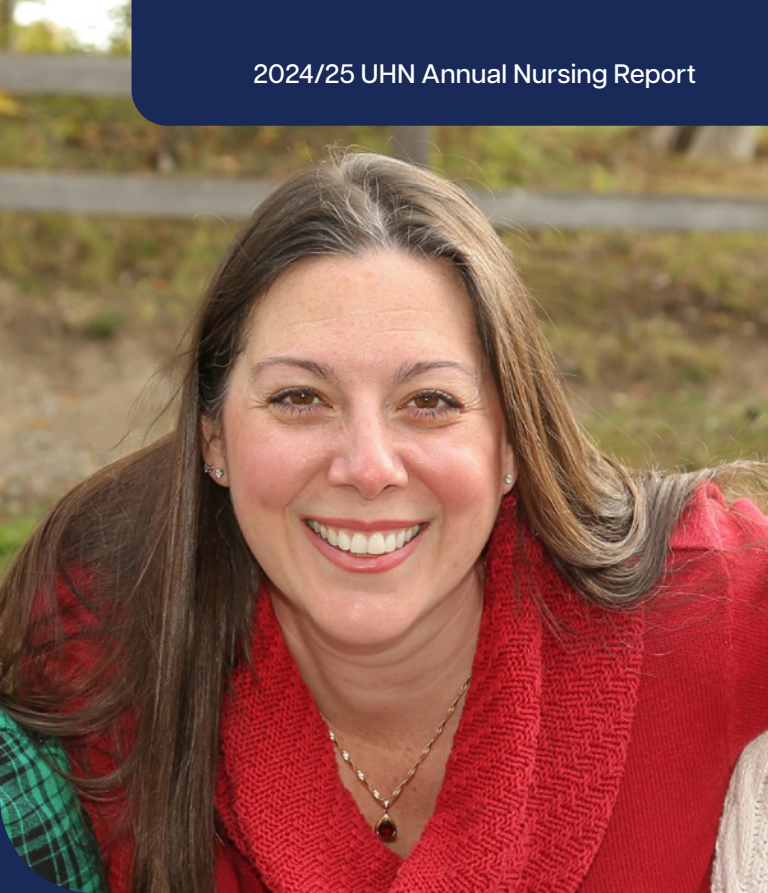
commitment that has since shaped not only a personal leadership path but also contributed meaningfully to the nursing profession across Ontario.

“Our mission is to create and influence the future of nursing leadership within Ontario’s healthcare system,” Dawn explains. “Our strategic plan is built on three pillars: one collective nursing leadership voice, building capacity of nursing leaders, and connecting with our members.”

Among many contributions Dawn has made through this work, the RNAO Management and Leadership for Nurses program stands out as a highlight. “I really enjoyed being a facilitator and contributor to that work,” she reflects. Another source of pride is serving on the NLN conference planning committee. “Reading all the submissions gives me a pulse on what’s happening in nursing leadership across sectors. It’s inspiring – and sometimes concerning – to see trends, like the decline of nurses in executive leadership roles in some sectors.”

*“Our strategic plan is built on three pillars: one collective nursing leadership voice, building capacity of nursing leaders, and connecting with our members.”*

**-Dawn Donaldson, Nurse Manager**



This concern fuels ongoing advocacy, she says. “Nurses are integral to our healthcare system. It’s vital that we are represented at every table – provincial, federal, and organizational.”

Dawn’s work on the NLN conference also highlighted for her the power of bringing people from diverse backgrounds, roles, and sectors together. The presentations and submissions use data to tell powerful stories, while the people in the room converge to co-create solutions. These “magic moments” of synergy underscore the value of building community, sharing data-backed stories, and recognizing that every role holds a vital piece of the puzzle. As we strive for a unified nursing voice across Canada, it becomes clear that leadership is not defined by title but by the ability to connect, elevate, and innovate together.

Serving on the NLN board has offered valuable insights, including Dawn’s own personal growth. “I’ve learned that I am capable and qualified to lead at the highest level. It’s done wonders for

my confidence and helped me hone my voice. Leadership isn’t about having all the answers – it’s about stepping up, staying grounded in your purpose, and bringing others along with you,” she says.

Participation in NLN has sharpened her leadership approach. “I’m clearer in who I am as a nurse,” she says. “That clarity translates into more focused communication with my teams, less distraction, and a relentless drive to improve care and access for our patients.”

As Dawn reflects on her contributions to nursing leadership with NLN, she highlights the importance of being part of the broader nursing community: “Broader involvement deepens empathy and makes us stronger, more connected leaders.”

Dawn has not only become a stronger leader through her work at NLN but has set the stage for the next generation of nursing leaders across Ontario.

# Elevating Oncology Nursing:

## A Conversation with a Provincial Leader

**Maritza Carvalho is passionate about oncology nursing.**

As the current Manager of Professional Practice for Oncology at UHN, she sees first-hand how dynamic and diverse the field is. This passion has led her to her most recent achievement in becoming the Provincial Lead for Oncology Nursing at Cancer Care Ontario (CCO). Her experience and involvement at the provincial level offer a compelling look into the evolving role of nurses in shaping cancer care across Ontario.

Having previously served as a regional lead with CCO, when the Provincial Lead position came up she was immediately interested. “I wanted to make sure that as changes to healthcare happen, nurses have a place at that table,” she says.

Through her role at CCO, Maritza has gained a broader understanding of the cancer care system and built connections that allow for the sharing of best practices across the province. “It creates that community of practice... and prepares us for

what’s coming down the pipeline.”

Maritza is involved in several initiatives, including audits of nursing practice standards and partnerships with emergency departments and systemic therapy teams. These efforts aim to elevate oncology nursing and ensure consistent, high-quality care across Ontario. “We’re really trying not to work in silos... those partnerships influence provincial collaboration.”

When asked if her involvement in the CCO has changed her perspective on nursing as a profession, Maritza reflected, “it’s not so much changed my perspective but reinforced and reignited what I’ve always known is there, which is nurses as advocates and change leaders.”

For Maritza, the role is more than a job – it’s a source of personal fulfillment and a way to contribute meaningfully to the future of healthcare.

“It’s a bucket filler... it aligns with my passion to elevate oncology nursing.”

*“I wanted to make sure that as changes to healthcare happen, nurses have a place at that table.”*

**- Maritza Carvalho, Manager of Professional Practice**

She also spoke about the importance of preserving quality care for future generations, driven by a personal truth: “Every patient deserves the quality of care I’d expect for myself or my family.”

Maritza encourages nurse leaders across specialties to get involved in broader organizations, not just for professional growth but to contribute to systemic improvement.

“Be the change you want to see... plant seeds for future generations.”



## Leading with Heart:

### A Nurse Practitioner's Journey of Impact and Advocacy

**In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, nurse practitioners (NPs) are increasingly recognized as pivotal leaders driving change, innovation, and patient-centred care.** One such leader is Barbara Bailey, whose career spans over two decades of clinical excellence, mentorship, and advocacy. Barb is an NP at the Toronto Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) Program at UHN's Peter Munk Cardiac Centre. There she works with an incredible team, and credits her success to their support. She also serves as President of the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario (NPAO), where Barb exemplifies the transformative power of nursing leadership.

**Barb began her nursing journey in 1995 after graduating from McMaster University.**

Her early years were shaped by critical care roles in neurosurgery and cardiac surgery across Canada and the United States, including stints in

Dallas and Honolulu. These experiences honed her clinical acumen and ignited a passion for advanced practice nursing.

Returning to Canada, she joined the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU) at UHN's Toronto General Hospital, where she was inspired by the nurse practitioner role and pursued her acute care NP certification at the University of Toronto. Since 2007, she has specialized in adult congenital heart disease, building a post-operative clinic that enhances patient outcomes through early discharge, reduced hospital stays, and improved satisfaction.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Barb and her colleagues demonstrated extraordinary resilience. With ICU experience, she transitioned to full-time critical care, maintaining her NP role while supporting patients through unprecedented challenges. This period underscored her commitment to adaptability and patient care.



Barbara Bailey  
Nurse Practitioner

**Her contributions have not gone unnoticed.** In May 2025, Barb received the prestigious Mae Gallant Leadership Excellence Award in Cardiovascular Nursing at the Canadian Cardiovascular Congress. In June, she was honoured with the Exceptional Interprofessional Contributions to Surgical Patient Experience Award at UHN – an accolade nominated by patients and families.

Alongside colleague Tieghan Killackey, the RBC Financial Group Chair in Cardiovascular Nursing Research, Barb presented a poster at Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses showcasing the post-op clinic's impact. The overwhelming interest has led to plans for a webinar series and a formal research study to quantify the clinic's value in reducing emergency visits and improving access to care.

As NPAO President, Barb has championed policy changes, including expanded scope of practice and public funding access for NPs under the Canada Health Act. She has advocated for public funding and flexible funding models for nurse

practitioners and has collaborated with leaders like Dr. Michelle Acorn, advocating for team-based care and sustainable NP roles.

Her leadership extends to national platforms, including the Royal College's Health Workforce Wellbeing initiative and the CNA's cardiovascular certification working group. Through these roles, she mentors emerging NPs, fosters interprofessional collaboration, and ensures nursing voices are heard at decision-making tables.

With upcoming changes to NP designation and healthcare funding, Barb envisions a future where NPs are empowered to lead, innovate, and remain integral to institutions like UHN. Her dedication to mentorship, certification, and advocacy reflects a deep commitment to the profession's sustainability and growth.

As she transitions to Past President of NPAO, Barb continues to inspire through her humility, passion, and unwavering belief in the power of nursing leadership.

# Championing Internationally Educated Nurses:

## A Journey of Leadership and Impact

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, the contributions of Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) continue to shape the future of nursing practice and leadership. One such inspiring figure is an Irene Cecilia Azurin, Advanced Practice Nurse Educator (APNE) at UHN, originally from the Philippines, whose 20-year journey spans bedside care, academia, and leadership. With a Master’s in Nursing and certification in Medical-Surgical Nursing from the Canadian Nursing Association, she also serves as an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Toronto. Recently, Irene was inducted as a Board Director for the Society of Internationally Educated Nurses in North America (SIENNA).

As an APNE, one of the most meaningful initiatives she co-led is the IEN Pathway Program at UHN – a program designed by IENs, for IENs. It provides structured support for safe transition to practice, addressing knowledge and clinical reasoning gaps through tailored assessments and check-ins. This initiative not only enhances clinical judgment but also fosters a nurturing environment for professional growth.

Guided by the mantra “teach to inspire, learn to educate,” Irene’s passion for knowledge generation, translation, and clinical application has fueled a commitment to supporting IENs both locally and globally. SIENNA’s overall mission – to facilitate knowledge transformation, advocate for supportive policies, and promote professional development – resonates deeply with her vision. As part of SIENNA’s Executive Board, one of the key goals of the organization is to expand membership across North America. This growth enables a broader impact, empowering IENs to become a collective force for change in the global healthcare landscape.

Irene’s experience in co-leading the IEN Pathway Program has underscored the importance of coaching and mentorship. Supported by visionary leaders in Practice-Based Education, She finds fulfillment in both giving and receiving guidance. Living the dream of doing what one loves, the role at UHN and SIENNA offers a platform to pay it forward to her peers and future leaders.



Irene Cecilia Azurin, APNE

**Volunteerism through SIENNA has deepened Irene’s commitment to servant leadership – enhancing education, elevating practice, and advancing scholarship.** Furthermore, engaging with nursing leaders from diverse regions and specialties has revealed a rich tapestry of knowledge and lived experience, fostering inclusive environments where IENs feel valued and empowered. She finds participation in external organizations like SIENNA contributes significantly to nursing leadership development. It facilitates knowledge exchange, supports continuous growth, and strengthens the collective voice of IENs in healthcare. This engagement ensures that leadership is not only informed but also transformative. Irene’s journey exemplifies how dedication, collaboration, and a passion for education can create lasting impact – one nurse, one initiative, and one empowered community at a time.

# UHN News HIGHLIGHTS

## Nursing Teams Lead the Way with ED/ Seniors Emergency Medicine Program

Toronto General and Western emergency department nursing teams joined a geriatric-focused training program co-led by SEMC and nurse educators. Held at Michener Institute, it taught senior-friendly trauma care to 174 providers. This initiative supports UHN’s 2026 Seniors Emergency Medicine Centre launch, enhancing safety and care for older ED patients.

[bit.ly/ed-semc](https://bit.ly/ed-semc)



## First of its Kind Nursing Internship in Quality, Safety & Clinical Adoption

UHN launched its first clinical nurse internship, partnering Collaborative Academic Practice with Quality and Safety teams. Nurse Dowon Choi helped design IRIS, a new safety event reporting system, using front-line insights. Her work advanced patient safety, supported nursing development, and aligned with UHN’s strategy to empower nurses through innovation and leadership.

[bit.ly/nursing-internship](https://bit.ly/nursing-internship)



## UHN Launched Innovative Smoking Cessation Program For Surgery Patients

After quitting smoking before lung cancer surgery, Alan Reeve benefited from UHN’s new LungRAMP smoking cessation program. Led by nurses Marco Cheung and Rachel Downie, the initiative supports patients pre- and post-surgery, improving outcomes. With a 46 per cent quit rate, it’s expanding to other surgical areas to enhance recovery.

[bit.ly/LungRAMP](https://bit.ly/LungRAMP)



# AWARDS & Celebrations

## Academic Achievements

- Jovina Bachynski, PhD, Queen’s University School of Nursing
- Nikki Marks, Doctor of Nursing, Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto

## Roles & Appointments

- Dr. Alyssa Indar has been appointed the new Director of Scholarship and Innovation
- Dr. Tieghan Killackey has been appointed the RBC Chair in Cardiovascular Nursing Research at UHN and the University of Toronto

## Great Achievements

- Barbara Bailey receives the Mae Gallant Leadership Excellence Award in Cardiovascular Nursing
- Aideen Carrol was awarded first place in the Nursing Hero Award
- Yannan (Bay) Cai was awarded second place in the Nursing Hero Award
- Michelle Trinh was awarded the Bloomberg Nursing 2023/24 Teaching Award
- Jane Roxas was awarded the IEN Joan Lesmond Award
- Victoria Bains was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal
- Karen Tjew was awarded the Sprott Surgery Recognition Award for Rising Star for Nursing Excellence in Patient Care
- Jessica Kuoch and Halima Mohidin were awarded the Sprott Surgery Recognition Award for Nursing Excellence in Mentorship and Clinical Education
- Rose Puopolo was awarded the Sprott Surgery Recognition Award for Nursing Leadership in Outstanding Patient Care
- Barbara Bailey was awarded the Sprott Surgery Recognition Award for Exceptional Interprofessional Contributions to Surgical Patient Experience
- Salima Ladak contributed as part of the Expert Panel of the RNAO on the 4th Edition of Best Practice Guidelines for Pain: Prevention, Assessment and Management Guidelines
- Debra Johnson is the lead author on the Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for healthcare professionals by Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy and Continence Canada
- UHN received a WeRPN grant to conduct the research project “What is the RPN role in transitional care programs? Generating evidence to inform workforce planning”. Led by Dr. Alyssa Indar and Dr. Kathy McGilton as Co-Principal Investigators, and with the team including Pam Hubley, Gaby Golea, Angela Dowd, Helena Ross, Sally Jirjodhan and Sherry Faizer

# Daisy AWARDS

## Direct Patient Care Awards

- Laura Valenza, TG Medical Day Unit
- Daiva Didzbalis, Princess Margaret Hematology Day Unit
- Shahithra Ramesh, TRI Lyndhurst Spinal Cord Rehab Unit 1A
- Karen Chen, TW Emergency Department
- Mae Deocamp, TRI Lyndhurst Spinal Cord Injruy Program
- Kumil Mahboob, TG 9ES General Surgery
- Yen Ly, Princess Margaret, Systemic Therapy Unit
- Jeus Cabaluna, TG, 10ES
- Rachel Morris, West Park Functional Enhancement Service 2D
- Anthea Chironda, TRI Bickle Centre South 3 Complex Continuing Care/Dialysis

## Nursing Week Awards

- Theresa McKnight, NP, TG Multi-Organ Transplant, Lifetime Achievement Award
- Chelsey McFarland, TW MSNICU, Nurse Leader Award
- TGH 6A MOT/Nephrology, Nursing Team Award

## 2025 Annual UHN Nursing Awards

### The Annual Nursing & Health Professions Staff Scholarships & Awards

The Annual Nursing & Health Professions Staff Scholarships & Awards allow UHN staff, donors, and friends to come together to recognize UHNs phenomenal nursing and health profession staff and the role they play in transforming patient-centred care.

## Congratulations to the 2025 Nursing Winners

<b>The Alumnae Association of the School of Nursing TGH Scholarship for Excellence at TGH</b> Danica Ly	<b>Yau-Fong Cheung Scholarship</b> Megan Smith	<b>MSA Award for Excellence</b> Sukhdip Grewal
<b>The Michael R. Applin Nursing Award</b> Judith (Judy) Cerovski	<b>Frances Falconer Nursing Scholarship</b> Tamar Telliyan	<b>Dr. Marie Louise Murphy Medical Education Award</b> Chantal Shay Wiggins McKinnon
<b>Associated Medical Services Recognition Award for Exemplary End-of-Life Care</b> Ian Jefferson Alagadan	<b>Mary Ferguson-Paré Prize for Innovation in Nursing</b> Chantel Lutchman	<b>Nursing &amp; Professional Services Staff Scholarship</b> Tina Cheung Jennifer Hou Sarah Marchewka Summaiya Mankrod
<b>Elizabeth S. Barford Education Award for Neuroscience Nursing</b> Pelageya Grebneva	<b>Mary Ferguson-Paré Research Award for Nursing</b> Kateryna Metersky	<b>Ginat Shleifer Scholarship for New Graduates</b> Marilia Dsouza
<b>Thomas J. Bell Scholarship for Nurses Demonstrating Excellence in Palliative or End-Of-Life Care</b> Archna Patel	<b>The Marvin Gerstein Award</b> Narges Moradi Judith (Judy) Cerovski	<b>The Jill Smirnis Award for Outstanding Patient Care in Emergency Service</b> Licinia (Lucy) Simoes
<b>Orma L. Benson Memorial Scholarship</b> Rebecca Yeun Ting Law	<b>Evelyn Hall Education Award</b> Amanda Moreira	<b>The Jill Smirnis Award for Excellence in Cardiology Nursing</b> Joy Ann Patrice Dela Luna
<b>Bennett Nursing Scholarship Award</b> Jenna Kahn	<b>Marianne Johnston Scholarship</b> Iliham Elias	<b>Ilse Tacoma Nursing Award Scholarship</b> Julie Yip Christine Dumbrique
<b>Bennet Emerging Nursing Leaders Award</b> Tenzin Bhuti	<b>Lichtblau Nursing Scholarship</b> Narges Moradi Celeste de Peiza	<b>BD Lori Taylor Nursing Excellence Scholarship</b> Celeste de Peiza
<b>Bolton Nursing Scholarship</b> Olivia Howe	<b>Tecla Lin Nursing Award</b> Tenzin Bhuti	<b>Cathy Valenti Nursing Award</b> Anthea Chironda
<b>Janine Boston Award for Nursing Excellence</b> Janice Lin	<b>John Locke Churchill Scholarship</b> Narges Moradi Yoko Xu Alysha Geauvreau Celese de Peiza	<b>Betty Watt Prize for Courageous Leadership in Nursing</b> Karen Tjew
<b>Kathleen Butcher Scholarship</b> Pei Xuan (Rachel) Chen	<b>John Maddigan Nursing Award</b> Alexandra Sobczak	

# 2024-25 Collaborative Academic Practice (CAP) Innovation Fellowships

The CAP Innovation Fellowship Program offers participants opportunities to gain experience leading change while engaging in ongoing dialogue and learning about leadership, quality improvement and change management.

We are pleased to recognize the 2024-25 nursing fellowship recipients.

- Annie Fellowship for Nurses**  
Daiva Didzbalis, RN, Malignant Hematology Day Unit - PM
- Brenda Perkins Meingast Critical Care Fellowship**  
Pauline Tescon, RN, CVICU - TG
- Collaborative Academic Practice Fellowship for Nurses**  
Maja Cardinale, RN, Hematology Ambulatory - PM
- Collaborative Academic Practice Fellowship for Nurses**  
Fathima Faizer, RPN, Transitional Care Unit - TR
- Collaborative Academic Practice Fellowship for Nurses**  
Viksit Bali, RN, MSNICU - TW
- Collaborative Academic Practice Fellowship for Nurses**  
Pelageya Grebneva, RN, 6AB Neurovascular Unit - TW

- Emergency Department Royal Bank of Canada CAP Fellowship**  
Tricia Williams, RN, Emergency Department - TW
- Fela & Saul Lichtblau Family Fellowship**  
Ciara Papaioannou, RN, LTLD/Geri Rehab - TR
- Joey & Toby Tanenbaum Fellowship**  
Judy Cerovski, RN, GIM & Cardiology - TW
- Scott McIntaggart Transplant Fellowship**  
Sydney Leicht, RN, Multi-Organ Transplant 7A/B - TG
- Sprott Surgery Fellowship**  
Veronica Kubiak, RN, Operating Room - TW
- Sprott Surgery Fellowship**  
Pailsey Murray, RN, Endoscopy - TG

# Nursing by the NUMBERS



