

Better Health Stronger Communities

2025 NURSING ANNUAL REPORT



Our Mission

To improve lives and
build stronger communities
through better health

Our Vision

To be the health partner
of choice



**Memorial
Health**



Nursing is a team effort, and we're proud of how Memorial Health nursing teams come together to make a difference for our patients and communities.

In this report, you'll learn how evidence-based practice, a commitment to continuous learning and partnership with other clinical areas touched lives and transformed our care in 2025. Across our five hospitals and Memorial Care clinics, nursing teams worked together in innovative ways to meet the needs of the people we serve.

Those teams also provided valuable, hands-on experience for the next generation of nurses, sharing their expertise and experience through programs like nursing internships and externships.

It takes all of us to create positive outcomes and great patient experiences. Thank you to all the nursing team members who made the success stories in this report possible.

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Nursing Protocols Help Rank DMH Among Safest Hospitals Nationwide

Over the past several years, Decatur Memorial Hospital has succeeded not only in lowering rates of hospital-acquired infection and other patient safety issues, but also sustaining those gains over time.

In 2023, the DMH Nursing Performance Outcomes Council, working with Infection Prevention, began a project aimed at reducing rates of catheter-associated urinary tract infection, or CAUTI. They introduced some simple changes to the way that nursing teams care for patients with catheters—changes that had a big impact.

In 2025, Becker's Hospital Review included DMH on lists of hospitals with the lowest CAUTI rates in the country, as well as the lowest MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) rates.

CAUTI prevention isn't the only area where DMH excels. The same nursing interventions that helped reduce the impact of CAUTIs, plus some additional measures, also reduced the rate of central line associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI).

Stacey Taylor, MSN, RN, DMH professional nursing practice director, said that transparency with data is central to that success. Nursing units regularly discuss their current infection rates and celebrate successes, keeping each other accountable. Allowing everyone access to the data means that nursing teams can see the impact of the interventions they're putting into place in real time.

Taylor noted that feedback from frontline nurses helped integrate the new interventions into day-to-day work. "People want to know more than just what to do—they want to know why they're doing it," she said. "Showing the evidence in the data helps do that."



Process Changes Improve Infection Rates at Memorial Hospitals

Across Memorial Health, nursing teams are working in partnership with Infection Prevention to decrease the risk of hospital-acquired infections.

LMH & TMH

Collaboration Leads to Improved C. diff Interventions

Nursing teams at both LMH and TMH took steps to prevent C. diff infections in 2025, working collaboratively with other teams to implement new protocols.

TMH nursing leadership met with Infection Prevention in 2025 to review the case of a patient who transferred to the TMH swing bed program with symptoms that were not immediately identified as C. diff, but who tested positive a few days later.

The group quickly applied what they'd learned from the case to enhance admission screening and provide targeted colleague education on C. diff symptoms, risk factors and testing.

Within a week after the interventions were put into place, the nursing team identified another at-risk transfer patient who tested positive. But early isolation and testing prevented the case from being classified as a TMH hospital-acquired infection—and reduced the risk that the infection could spread to others.

“This is a great example of how we are able to adapt and make changes quickly to apply what we’ve learned,” said Eli Heicher, DNP, RN, CENP, TMH chief nursing officer. “I’m proud that our teams are always open to new processes and workflows that make our care safer.”

At LMH, the nursing team developed and implemented an enhanced C. diff prevention and management protocol designed to reduce hospital-acquired infections and improve outcomes. They also worked together with multiple areas, including Hospital Medicine, Acute Care Nursing, Coding and Clinical Documentation and Infection Prevention, to reduce the incidence of urinary tract infections and acute kidney injury.

“Collaboration is at the heart of nursing practice, and it’s rewarding to see how these cross-disciplinary teams are creating better patient outcomes,” said chief nursing officer Roxanne Stelle, BSN, RN, CHPN, RHCNOC.

JMH

Process Change in Ambulatory Surgery Decreases Infection Risk

For many years, JMH pre-op nurses performed surgical hair clipping inside the Operating Room—a long-standing routine that seemed efficient but didn’t fully align with evolving evidence on surgical site infection prevention.

In 2025, the OR and Same-Day Surgery teams adjusted their protocols to perform hair clipping in the pre-op area. The teams also implemented a system within Smartboard to document whether a patient required clipping and indicate when it was complete.

“Not only did this work reduce SSI risk, it has also reduced OR delays and created a smoother patient flow,” said Jamie Clark, MBA, MSN, RN, Manager of Ambulatory Surgery, PAS and PACU. “This further strengthened our infection prevention protocols in a year when we experienced zero SSIs.”

Proactive Efforts Reduce Central Line Associated Blood Stream Infections

In 2025, Springfield Memorial Hospital achieved a 17% improvement in CLABSI rates compared to 2024, reflecting sustained focus on evidence based nursing practice and interdisciplinary collaboration. This improvement was supported by a nursing quality blitz that provided registered nurses with targeted education and hands on return demonstration of central line care, including dressing changes and line access.

Nursing teams also strengthened proactive line removal practices through a daily, structured assessment of line necessity. Working in close collaboration with physicians, nurses are actively reducing unnecessary central lines that place patients at increased risk for infection. In addition, a clinical hygiene team was developed to provide daily medical bathing with chlorhexidine gluconate for patients with high risk central lines, further strengthening infection prevention efforts.

“Together, these nursing led initiatives have improved reliability of central line care and contributed to safer outcomes for patients,” said Jennifer Bond, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, vice president and chief nursing officer at SMH. “It takes a dedicated team of nurses working together with physicians and infection preventionists to continually improve care.”

Collaborating to Improve Cancer Patient Outcomes

The 2024 Jacksonville Memorial Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment identified cancer as a leading health concern in Morgan County, with local cancer incidence and mortality rates exceeding state and national averages.

In response, JMH launched a collaborative initiative between the Ambulatory Nursing Clinics and Rehabilitation. Nurses and other caregivers completed oncology-focused education and advanced clinical training designed to enhance care delivery for patients undergoing cancer treatment.

With the generous support of the JMH Foundation and the Mia Ware Foundation, JMH expanded oncology expertise across multiple clinical disciplines. Ten specialty and palliative care nurses and 34 occupational, physical, and speech therapists obtained General Oncology Rehabilitation Certification.

“This investment helps us establish a strong interdisciplinary foundation for comprehensive, patient-centered oncology care,” said Lisa Pennell, MSN, RN, Manager of Ambulatory Nursing Clinics. “Nurses now have the training they need to ensure patients can access team-based oncology care.”





Collaboration Brings Minimally Invasive Biopsy to SMH Patients

The Special Procedures team at Springfield Memorial Hospital began offering ION Bronchoscopy in 2025, thanks to collaboration with medical imaging, pulmonologists, respiratory therapists, anesthesia and pathology.

This cutting-edge, minimally invasive process for lung nodule biopsy uses robotic bronchoscopy to improve precision and access difficult areas of the lung.

“This is a true team endeavor that helps us diagnose and treat lung cancer in a more timely way,” said Kirsten Lindley, MS, RN, CCRN, director of perioperative services at SMH. “When we can find cancer earlier, patients often have more treatment options, which gives them more time with the people they love and more life to live.”

Teamwork Decreases Falls at TMH

Swing bed patients often have a higher fall risk due to recent surgery or injuries. At TMH, a team that included representatives from nursing, physical therapy, patient safety and quality came together to identify contributing factors and implement strategies to reduce that risk.

They developed interventions that called for increased use of assistive and lift equipment, specialized seat cushions and additional balance training from physical therapists. Nurses provided education for patients and families, along with enhanced signage to increase awareness of fall risk.

As a result of these targeted interventions, falls with injury per 1,000 patient days decreased from 2.4 in FYTD25 to 0.0 in FYTD26.

“It’s important to have the right team in place to address safety issues,” said Nicole Heimsness, BSN, RN, Manager of Acute Care. “Fall prevention is complex, and we are fortunate to have teams across multiple areas committed to keeping our patients safe.”



Getting Lifesaving Care to Patients Faster

Process changes at Decatur Memorial Hospital and Springfield Memorial Hospital are helping deliver emergency care faster.

DMH

High-Quality Heart Care, After Hours

When a heart attack strikes, every minute matters. Delivering rapid, lifesaving care can be especially complex when patients arrive in the cardiac catheterization lab during the night.

In 2025, Decatur Memorial Hospital launched a focused improvement project aimed at reducing the time between the arrival of the first cath lab team member and the start of a patient's procedure. At the outset, patients waited an average of 32 minutes for treatment after the first staff member arrived.

The project team introduced a standardized approach to after-hours activations, including the creation of an "first-arriving nurse" kit stocked with essential equipment and paperwork. Clear, consistent workflows were also established to ensure every team member understood their role from the moment the patient arrived.

These changes led to significant improvements in door-to-balloon times. Procedure start times improved by 28 percent during daytime hours and 20 percent at night, resulting in an overall 23 percent reduction for patients treated at DMH.

As a result, patients who arrive at the DMH cath lab after hours now receive faster, more efficient care—bringing them one step closer to better outcomes when time is most critical.

“We’re very proud of the caliber of heart care we offer here at DMH,” said Ryan Williams, manager, CV Lab. “This project is just one way we’re ensuring our patients receive high-quality, lifesaving care—no matter the time of day.”

SMH

Expediting Emergency Care

In February 2025, the Emergency Department team at Springfield Memorial Hospital successfully transitioned all acute emergency paging for strokes, traumas and major heart attacks to a new communication platform. The system can access physician schedules and specialty clinical teams, message them about the emergent patient arrival to the hospital and trigger the teams to prepare for time-sensitive emergencies.

Since implementation, stroke patients are being seen by clinical experts five minutes sooner, implementing treatment without delay. In stroke care, where every minute directly impacts patient outcomes, this five minute is a meaningful improvement in care.

“This achievement reflects the strong collaboration, thoughtful planning, and commitment to excellence demonstrated by both the Stroke and ED teams,” said Jennifer Love, MBA, BSN, RN, TNS, ECRN, CEN, registered nurse and system administrator for Emergency, Neuro and Trauma Services. “Their dedication to improving processes and embracing innovative solutions continues to enhance the quality and timeliness of care delivered to our patients.”

Honoring the End-of-Life Experience for Organ Donor Families

For several years, Springfield Memorial Hospital has hosted Honor Walks to honor organ donors and thank those who make the gift of life possible through donation. Hospital staff line the hallways, silently expressing their gratitude and respect, as the donor is transported to the operating room.

In 2025, SMH cared for a patient at the end of life who was a registered organ donor but was unable to complete the donation process. Feedback from that patient’s family led SMH nursing teams to create a “Donor in Spirit” program. If donation cannot proceed after the patient is brought to the OR, the patient and family are respectfully welcomed back to their ICU room by the care team, who stand silently outside the room in honor of the patient’s selfless intention to donate.

Feedback on the program from both nursing staff and families has been positive, emphasizing the ability to honor the intent behind the gift, even when the donation process can’t go forward.

“We believe SMH is one of the first hospitals in Illinois to offer this experience when donation is not possible,” said Angela Hermes, MSN, RN, CCRN, nurse manager, SMH 3C ICU. “Our goal is to provide dignity, emotional continuity and recognition for the donor families.”



Nursing Helps Reduce Registration Errors at LMH

When an error occurs in the initial patient registration process, it can lead to further errors in coding and billing that require significant resources to correct—and which affect the quality of the patient experience.

Between April and October 2024, nearly one in ten acute care patients admitted from the LMH Emergency Department were registered with the incorrect status (observation or inpatient). These discrepancies resulted in time-consuming rework for care managers, Patient Access, Coding and Billing supervisors and multiple clinical managers. These discrepancies also led to potential errors in billing and patient records.

More crucially, it increased the length of stay for patients in the ED. Care managers Chelsey Smock, BSN, RN, and Ashley Gleason, BSN, RN, submitted this issue as a potential improvement project to the Quality Division.

Using Lean Six Sigma methodology, Barb Burneson, RN, CHPQ, CPSS, CSSBB, and Jessica Alwerdt, DMSc, MS, MSPA, PA-C, DFAAPA, led a multi-disciplinary team that identified issues with admission status differences between the ED provider and the hospitalist admission orders.

By standardizing the process used by ED providers and hospitalists, they were able to decrease the percentage of patients admitted from the ED with an incorrect status from 9% to 1%. Stakeholders report improved communication efficiency and satisfaction with the accuracy and completeness of information. “While these errors might seem small, they were having a big impact on the patient experience,” Burneson said. “These changes not only help our patients, they also reduced the amount of time our colleagues spend redoing tasks.”

New Nursing Role Supports Lifesaving Screenings

In 2025, Decatur Memorial Hospital saw a significant increase in colonoscopy volumes thanks to a unique initiative to increase the number of patients accessing these lifesaving screenings.

Both Memorial Specialty Care General Surgery and Memorial Specialty Care Gastroenterology had long lists of patients who were overdue for colonoscopies, but staff lacked the time and resources to reach out to these patients in addition to their other duties. Memorial Specialty Care hired a dedicated screening colonoscopy nurse at both clinic locations to focus on contacting, screening, scheduling and educating these patients about the colonoscopy process.

“We know that early detection is crucial,” said Patricia Burns, LPN. “By dedicating a nursing role specifically to following up with these patients, we can ensure they’re receiving timely screenings.”

LMH Improves Patient Education, Communication in Swing Bed Program

This year, Lincoln Memorial Hospital nurses helped create the “Preparing for Swing Bed Program” brochure, developed to improve patient understanding, readiness and overall engagement in the Swing Bed transitional care process.

The project was spearheaded by a dedicated bedside nurse, Ashley Vaughn, RN, who identified a gap in consistent, patient friendly education resources when it came to the LMH Swing Bed Program. Recognizing the importance of clear communication during transitions of care, the nurse led the development process and coordinated input from the multi-disciplinary team. The brochure’s content and design were refined through contributions from multiple disciplines, ensuring accuracy, clarity and alignment with the full scope of care provided.

Memorial Health Hospitals Honored for Maternity, Baby Care

Decatur Memorial Hospital, Jacksonville Memorial Hospital and Springfield Memorial Hospital received national recognition for high-quality care for mothers and babies in 2025.

The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative recognized Family Maternity Suites at SMH as a recipient of the 2025 Illinois Birthing Hospital Quality Excellence Award.

The Illinois Birth Hospital Quality Designation Program recognizes hospitals that are focused on providing care that meets the unique needs of all patients, regardless of race, socioeconomic background or other factors.

In 2024, Family Maternity Suites received two awards of quality excellence from ILPQC, as well as a mini-grant that helped fund nurse education, labor-support tools and other resources.

“The well-being of the families we serve is at the heart of everything we do,” said Jessica Weirich, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, a registered nurse in SMH Family Maternity Suites who helped lead this work. “We’ve created new partnerships in our community that are helping us make sure mothers and babies in Springfield are getting the support they need during their pregnancy, delivery and beyond.”

DMH was also honored by ILPQC in 2025, receiving a Patient and Community Engagement Award for their successful Partner and Respectful Care Breakfast and an “On the Path to QI” Excellence Award for their work to improve care equity and promote safe sleep for infants.

In 2025, Family Maternity Suites at Jacksonville Memorial Hospital received its second consecutive designation as a Baby-Friendly Hospital, thanks to the work of FMS nurses to encourage and support breastfeeding.

JMH offers a Breastfeeding 101 class, a breastfeeding support group and an outpatient lactation clinic that provides free breastfeeding support to all families regardless of place of delivery. JMH Labor and Delivery nurses also offer free infant weight checks.

“Our nurses are committed to ensuring families have a safe place to turn during one of the most vulnerable and transformative seasons of their lives,” said Rachel Moore, MBA, BSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, nurse manager of JMH Family Maternity Suites. “The department is not just a place where babies are born, it’s a place where families return for ongoing support from a team dedicated to caring for the community.”





APRNS Help Memorial Specialty Care Psychiatry Expand Access

The Memorial Specialty Care Psychiatry team, including advanced practice registered nurses, is collaborating with teams across the organization to increase access to this crucial care.

A psychiatry APRN is now available to see pediatric patients on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at Memorial Care clinics in Chatham, Jacksonville and Lincoln. The APRNs provide consults for Memorial Care primary care providers.

Psychiatry provider Constance Habenschuss, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, is also part of a team providing psychotropic medication management support in the DMH intensive care unit. Intensivists can reach out to her to perform chart reviews and recommend medications. They have also developed clinical protocols to cover issues like delirium with agitation and alcohol or opioid withdrawal, resulting in reduced ICU and overall length of stay.

“Psychiatric care is a critical part of a patient’s overall wellness, and we continue to explore opportunities to embed our care within inpatient and outpatient settings,” said Habenschuss. “APRNs have a unique ability to make a difference in this area.”

The DOGtor is On Call at SMH

Interactions with therapy dogs have been shown to have emotional, psychological and social benefits for patients.

In partnership with psychiatric mental health practitioner Michelle Geiss, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC, the inpatient psychiatry nursing team at Springfield Memorial Hospital implemented a pet therapy program, “DOGtor on Call.”

Kylo, a certified therapy dog, and Michelle, his dedicated volunteer handler, began visiting eligible patients each week. Each dog-handler team completes an intensive four-month training and certification process and generously volunteer their time for both the certification process and ongoing hospital visits.

In 2026, the program expanded to include four more dogs thanks to a grant from the SMH Foundation. Feedback has been positive, with one patient sharing, “Dogs are my reason for living, and seeing this dog today is what will keep me going.”

JMH Implements Structured Quiet Time on Acute Care Unit

Hospital noise has a negative impact on patients’ rest, recovery and satisfaction. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently added questions about this topic to patient satisfaction surveys.

The inpatient acute care unit at JMH instituted structured quiet time during specific daytime and overnight hours under the guidance of clinical nurse Leticia Lopez, MSN, RN, MEDSURG- BC. Nurses also began clustering tasks to minimize interruptions.

Since quiet hours were implemented, patient satisfaction scores have increased in all areas related to rest and a peaceful environment.

“Quiet time is a low-cost, sustainable intervention that can enhance patient satisfaction and support healing environments,” Lopez said.

LMH Nursing Teams Help Expand Access to Specialty Care

In 2025, Lincoln Memorial Hospital expanded its commitment to community health by increasing access to specialty services across the region. This growth included additional office visits at Memorial Care in Lincoln, along with expanded procedures and surgeries performed locally at LMH.

Across the continuum of care, nurses and other healthcare professionals collaborated to make these improvements possible. The initiative was further supported by a \$385,000 grant from the LMH Foundation, creating a ripple effect throughout the hospital and strengthening services for patients close to home.

The grant has enabled LMH to expand outreach services across multiple specialties, including general surgery, plastic surgery, orthopedics, and urology—with the potential to add even more specialties in the future.

“The providers working in our community are also fully credentialed to provide surgery and other procedures at the hospital should those services be needed,” said chief nursing officer Roxanne Stelle, BSN, RN. “Patients have the right to ask for their services to be provided at LMH and close to home. We want every patient to know they have that choice and that LMH is here to care for our community’s needs.”

Megan Boosingham, manager of clinic operations at Memorial Care in Lincoln, agrees. “This has been a wonderful addition and has helped our local and surrounding communities immensely,” Boosingham said. “Our nursing team are finding that not only Lincoln residents, but patients from Decatur, Springfield, Bloomington, Mason City, Athens, Hartsburg, Mount Pulaski and beyond are willing to travel here for faster access to quality specialty care.”



Streamlined Processes Save Time, Resources for LMH Surgery

Surgical supply needs can be complex and highly variable. Leaders at Lincoln Memorial Hospital identified an opportunity to use the 5S (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain) methodology to review the supply inventory and reorganize supplies for ease of use.

The reorganization saves Surgery and Supply Chain colleagues an average of an hour per day, and nearly \$70,000 in unneeded inventory was removed from the shelves.



From the Classroom to Trusted Caregivers

Job progression programs like internships and externships are crucial for engaging student nurses and recruiting them into new graduate nursing roles within Memorial Health upon graduation.

These programs provide hands-on experience, allowing students to develop clinical skills, critical thinking and effective communication within interdisciplinary teams. By offering structured support and mentorship, job progression programs help bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice, fostering confidence and competence in future nurses.

- During the summer of 2025, Memorial Health hosted 75 student nurse interns across all five hospitals. Thanks to collaboration between Nursing and Human Resources, Organization Learning, Outcomes Improvement and executive leaders, enrollment in the immersive seven-week program increased by 44% from 2024.
- Memorial Health has introduced a new Student Nurse Extern role for interns who choose to stay employed with Memorial during their last year of nursing school. The Extern program provides a competitive option in our regional market for student nurses seeking job progression opportunities. Externs will continue to develop advanced nursing skills and confidence through hands-on patient care, functioning as patient care technicians while further honing their clinical abilities.

The internship and externship programs serve as vital recruitment tools for Memorial, offering opportunities for interns to transition into RN positions after graduation and patient care technician positions prior to graduation. In FY24, 49% of interns accepted RN positions with Memorial Health, and retention for program participants has historically been 75-85% at two years.

“This job progression program is an exciting opportunity for student nurses looking to further develop their clinical skills before graduation. And once they start with us, they usually stay because of the supportive relationships they form with our teams,” said Charla Warren, MSN, RN, CMSRN, nurse manager, who coordinates the program.

Building Leadership Skills

Each January, Memorial Health offers a six-month Nurse Leader Internship designed for clinical nurses interested in leadership roles. The program includes monthly education, leadership panels and shadow experiences with nurse leaders from all five hospitals each month. Since 2020, 22 of the 44 nurse leader interns have transitioned into a formal or informal leadership role at Memorial Health.

“A big part of the program is simply helping nurses see what’s possible,” said Heather Mangano, MSN, RN, CMSRN, nursing outcomes improvement facilitator. “By exposing them to the many leadership opportunities across Memorial Health, they can start to picture their next step, build confidence and chart a path that keeps them growing professionally at the bedside or in another role.”



Recent Publications by Memorial Nursing Team Members

Blakeman, J. R., Baur, K., Nielsen, S., LoVerde, J., Carls, C., & Cross, R. (2025). *Addressing the nurse educator shortage: Transitioning bedside nurses to clinical faculty by demystifying roles and responsibilities*. *Journal of Professional Nursing*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2025.04.012>

Eckhardt, A., Blakeman, E., Blanchetti, N., Deters, E. C., Kim, M., Whitaker, T., Yoder, D., & Blakeman, J. R. (2025, November). *Healthcare providers' conceptions of chest pain differ from the lay public* (Poster presentation). American Heart Association Scientific Sessions, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States. Poster MP2082.

Increased Support for Clinical Rotations

Memorial Health is expanding and improving support for nursing student clinical rotations (RN, LPN, CNA) at Memorial sites of care to ensure students have the resources they need to have a positive learning experience.

Robin Cross, MSN, RN, RNC-OB, Nursing Outcomes Improvement Facilitator, collaborated with Human Resources and our academic partners to implement Clinician Nexus in summer of 2025. This clinical placement software has enhanced tracking and analytics, strengthening collaboration and visibility into clinical rotation activity.

In the fall of 2025, MH hospitals hosted a record 3,571 pre-licensure RN, LPN and CNA students from across the central Illinois region. This level of investment reinforces our shared commitment to development of the next generation of nurses.





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