This year, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) achieved Magnet Designation for the third time. Only a little more than 500 hospitals worldwide receive the designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), one of the highest achievements a hospital can reach in the world of professional nursing. All Magnet-designated hospitals have to re-apply every four years. Every time, the application process takes months of documentation and preparation and comprehensive site visits, a difficult process that lasts for nearly two years. But this time around, the PPMC team faced another hurdle: a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and all the difficult restrictions that came with safely caring for patients in the midst of it.

The application process, which was spearheaded by Melissa Stanton, MSN, RN, director of Professional Practice and Nursing Outcomes, who serves as PPMC’s Magnet Program Director, starts with compiling years’ worth of documentation, including nursing satisfaction metrics, patient satisfaction metrics, identifying clinical nurses and nursing leaders, and the metrics behind initiatives at both the hospital and health system level. Restrictions in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 made it necessary for providers and staff to get creative and develop innovative ways to care for patients, many of which were highlighted in the Magnet document to illustrate the resourcefulness and dedication of staff. For instance, nurses stepped up as “PPE spotters,” to ensure everyone was wearing their personal protective equipment, and wearing it properly to protect against the virus. Nurses also implemented the use of baby monitors to provide constant supervision, since they have been utilizing this communication technology with families and caregivers of patients throughout the pandemic. After their virtual site visit, the appraiser noted that the process “couldn’t have gone more smoothly,” a testament to the rigorous preparation that went into the Magnet document and site visit.

“Nurses are the link that connects the inter-professional team across the continuum of care — patients, clinicians, families, and other staff. Their work is always essential to provide consistent, high-level care. Access to these preventive screenings is especially important, as the American Cancer Society warns that colorectal cancer is now the second deadliest cancer in the nation, and it disproportionately threatens Black Americans. Black patients are 20 percent more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 40 percent more likely to die from the disease when compared to white patients. This new GI center provides convenient access to early screenings, as well as to the advanced GI surgical and oncological interventions in the hospital, with the hopes that community members can get all of the care they need in one place.”

Over the past year and a half, much of our attention and energy here at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) has been laser-focused on providing compassionate care to all patients who come through our doors. As we move into Fall 2021, I’m excited to share the ways we have expanded our capacity for care, both physically with new construction and locations in South Jersey, and by expanding our offerings in a range of disciplines, notably in breast cancer and digestive and liver health.

We’ve made a big investment in developing a comprehensive Breast program at PPMC. Modeled after the other comprehensive cancer programs in the health system, the breast program at PPMC will provide care from start to finish for all patients: from mammograms and other screenings, to treatments like chemotherapy and radiation, to reconstructive plastic surgery. I am especially thrilled to welcome Leisha Elmore, MD, MSHP, from Washington University, and Mary Mahler, MD, from the University of Toronto, to round out the program.

Across the way, Penn Medicine University City (PMUC) at 3737 Market Street is now home to the Digestive and Liver Health Center, formerly housed in Wright-Saunders, whose principal aim is to expand access to screenings like colonoscopies and endoscopies, and other diagnostic care, while continuing to provide consistent, high-level care.

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Michele Volpe
Chief Executive Officer

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In keeping with the health system’s overall strategy to meet patients where they are across the region and offer services close to home, we also continue to build our presence in South Jersey, with our amazing facilities in Cherry Hill, Mount Laurel and Sewell. We are also continuing to expand our resources to meet the needs of all our neighbors in those communities, and provide these patients with the same level of care and feeling of community patients experience at our West Philadelphia locations.

Finally, we will ensure ease of access to our West Philadelphia campus with the construction of a new parking garage. The new garage will be at the current site of the 3910 building and parking lot. The 3910 building has been completely emptied and demolition will begin in October, lasting about 10 weeks. The new garage will be constructed over the next 18 to 24 months, and when finished, will have over 1,400 parking spaces, and will provide more amenities to staff and patients, like a covered pathway to the hospital and valet parking.

We are also committed to expanding our capacity for care by ensuring that no matter who or where we are, the care we provide is equitable. We have also renewed our commitment to addressing systemic racism and cultivating a culture of diversity, inclusion, and equity both on campus and in the Philadelphia community. It’s important for us to remain vigilant in practicing antiracism in our interactions with our colleagues, with our patients, and with our community. I am so grateful to everyone who courageously shared their experience and remarks on panels and in town halls. Your candor is an invaluable contribution to our efforts. It’s only with this honesty and vulnerability that we can expose disparities and move towards eliminating them, making quality health accessible to all.

To this end, Richard C. Wender, MD, joined the Penn School of Medicine, PPMC last summer as the chair of Family Medicine and Community Health, with an existing vision to expand the Department’s clinical and non-clinical health services, educational opportunities and research, with a focus on elevating engagement within our West Philadelphia community to address health disparities.

To be sure, these developments are exciting and something to celebrate. But in order to rise to the opportunities ahead, we need to care for ourselves. I know many staff members suffer from feelings of burnout after one of the most stressful and painful years on record. I want to remind everyone to take advantage of the incredible resources available to all staff at Penn Medicine. To start, UPHS Employee Assistance Program is available 24/7 to assist employees. More information is available at www.med.upenn.edu/psychiatry/phbcs.

“Superheroes,” in honor of 371 employees with various service milestones, anywhere from 5 to 45 years, is our West Philadelphia employee service anniversary celebration. This year’s fitting theme is “Celebrating PPMC Superheroes,” in honor of 371 employees with various service milestones, anywhere from 5 years all the way to 45 years. “It’s great to see the level of commitment to Presby, and the health system as a whole, ” said Zene Colt, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, human resources manager at PPMC. “It’s great to see the level of commitment to Presby, and the health system as a whole, ” said Zene Colt, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, human resources manager at PPMC. “We are so excited to honor the service of our staff again this year.”

This year, there are two employees celebrating 45 years at PPMC: David Scott, a respiratory therapy equipment technician, and Eric Smith, a radiology technician. There are also two employees celebrating 40 years at PPMC: Diane Andrews, RN, an OR nurse, and Barbara Oakes, in Patient Progression.

The celebration, in its 55th year, includes remarks from PPMC CEO Michelle Volpe, Chief Human Resources Officer Margarita Michelle, MBA, PhD, and other senior team members, to highlight achievements of staff. The event will also include a presentation from a soon-to-be-announced guest speaker. “The number of employees celebrating milestones this year highlights the level of commitment staff has to their work here at Penn Medicine,” Michele said. “Congratulations to all PPMC staff members celebrating milestones this year, and thanks for your dedication! This celebration is much deserved.”

Next, an excellent resource is PennCOBAL T, which offers Penn psychologists, psychotherapists, non-denominational chaplains, resilience coaches, and peers for one-on-one, non-judgmental support sessions, as well as group discussions. To date, 1 in 4 employees have visited PennCOBAL T and expressed high satisfaction. More than 10,000 unique users have visited PennCOBAL T and more than 3,300 self-scheduled appointments with a provider. I also encourage staff to take advantage of all the well-being benefits with Wellfoos. The health of patients and community are important, but your health — both physical and mental — are also of utmost importance. Please don’t hesitate to speak to your manager about assessing your workload and identifying ways to create more balance.

Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) ranks #27 in the United States and #5 globally alongside the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania on Newsweek’s World’s Best Smart Hospitals 2021. The list ranks the 250 best medical institutions that are leading the field in smart technologies like digital surgery, imaging, artificial intelligence, telehealth and electronic medical records. Results are based on worldwide recommendations from medical professionals.

“We are proud to develop and deploy the best possible approaches to care for our patients,” said Michele Volpe, Chief Executive Officer of PPMC. “This means we’re not only offering the most advanced diagnostic tools, treatments and therapies, but we also constantly seek to implement systems and technologies that make it easier and faster to deliver the right care to each patient, and provide them with a positive experience while they’re in our hospitals.”

According to William Hanse, MD, chief medical information officer at Penn Medicine, PPMC has most recently focused on initiatives to improve nursing efficiencies, including the use of a mobile application that allows nurses to do work on the computer system while on the move, rather than at a nursing station. The application allows nurses to send secure messages on the go and scan medication orders from their phones.

“We strive to use technology that helps improving speed and ensuring safety, so that less time is spent writing notes, ordering tests and prescriptions, and more energy and attention can be focused on the patient and their personalized care plan,” Hanson said.