

Magnet® Designation – Is It Worth It?

Martha B. Lyman, RN, MPH
Director of Nursing Systems and Special Projects
Magnet Project Coordinator
Main Line Health System

Since 1984, healthcare leaders have been watching the growth of the Magnet Recognition Program®. This program was developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to recognize health care organizations that provide nursing excellence by:

- Promoting quality in a setting that supports professional practice;
- Identifying excellence in the delivery of nursing services to patients/residents; and
- Disseminating “best practices” in nursing services.¹

Popular publications such as *Reader's Digest* and the *New York Times*² have advised readers to select a Magnet® hospital for excellence in nursing when they have the opportunity. One may wonder what this Magnet® designation is and how it really makes a difference.

Main Line Hospitals (Bryn Mawr, Lankenau, and Paoli Hospitals), began their “journey” toward Magnet® designation in 2002. In order to qualify, the three hospitals were required to make a serious assessment of organizational structure and nursing practice to identify where the fourteen “Forces of Magnetism” that comprise the evidence-based framework were apparent. These “Forces” relate to aspects of practice such as: nursing voice and image, ability to participate in decisions that affect practice, collegiality, professional development, quality improvement and research.¹

When practice didn't align, efforts were made to change the process and/or structure. For example, with strong leadership, nurses designed and implemented a career ladder to reward practice excellence and provide opportunities for career growth for nurses at the bedside.

In addition, they developed a unit-based shared decision-making model with unit councils that provide staff an opportunity for input into policies and practices. Unit councils are generally comprised of nurses who represent all shifts within the unit level. Nurses also initiated a structure and process for nursing research and innovation with a variety of other improvements such as: enhanced use of evidence-based practice;

strengthened interprofessional relationships; and introduction of a residency program for new graduate nurses. Nurses at all levels of the organization worked to embody the "Forces of Magnetism."

In September 2005, efforts were rewarded when Main Line Hospitals received the coveted American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Magnet® designation for a four-year term. At that time, only 2% of all hospitals and approximately 10 hospital systems had achieved the designation. We realized that the bar had been raised and it was important to continue to move forward. To this day, the Main Line Health Magnet® journey lives on. Nurses know that receiving this designation carries with it a level of accountability, not only to their organization but to the nursing community globally.

At Main Line Hospitals, change continues and the Magnet Recognition Program® has set the stage as a model program for other disciplines to follow. Several non-nursing departments have embraced a shared decision-making model and have begun to establish unit councils similar to the nursing department. The therapeutic disciplines have adopted a career ladder system to encourage and reward growth in their areas of expertise. Nurses have examined a research question, discovered new information, changed practice and shared experiences and knowledge through international presentations and journal publications. The past 3 years has seen an increase in bachelor- and master-prepared nurses, and in the number of board certifications for nurses. After 46% of their staff achieved board certification, The Bryn Mawr Hospital pediatric unit was recognized by the national Pediatric Nursing Certification Board for their commitment to excellence.

In general, the entire organization focuses on empowering those who are closest to the patient to make recommendations and decisions. Nurses at Main Line Health (MLH) are presently in the process of a "second generation" redesign of their shared decision model which will create an opportunity for every nurse to have input into areas of practice such as their environment, clinical issues, professional development, quality improvement and research. This model will better link the unit councils within the organization to other existing committees, enhancing decision making between and among staff and leaders.

An example of one initiative at MLH that uses Magnet® forces is a collaborative educational program titled the "Terrific Trio." This program linked a physician, staff nurse and a content expert together to collaboratively investigate the latest evidence dealing with a current topic. The team facilitated focus groups to understand clinical practice issues such as reduction of hospital infections and post-operative pain management at MLH hospitals. Practitioners then used the findings and current evidence to present

practice recommendations to a multidisciplinary audience. The first program dealt with reducing catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI). Since this program, each hospital established a multidisciplinary team to further study and reduce catheter days and related infections. Each hospital has implemented a CAUTI prevention “bundle” and one has seen a 65% reduction in catheter days and overall reduction in catheter-related urinary tract infections.

Based on extensive new research, the ANCC announced changes to their program aimed at building capacity for the future of nursing (and healthcare in general).³ Their intention is to promote and disseminate the best possible health care outcomes. As the ANCC works to keep up with the changing healthcare environment, so must all who aspire to achieve this designation. As the Magnet[®] journey to excellence attracts more organizations, it is more likely to impact change and positive outcomes on a broader scale.

Main Line Health has found participation in the Magnet Recognition Program[®] to be very valuable in terms of patient care outcomes, nurse - physician collegiality, educational achievement, and overall nursing satisfaction. Currently, the Magnet[®] journey to excellence has expanded to Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation and Riddle Memorial Hospitals under the direction of Chief Nursing Officer, Nancy Valentine RN, PhD, MPH, FAAN, FNAP. These organizations will apply for their initial Magnet[®] designation while Lankenau, Bryn Mawr, and Paoli Hospital seek re-certification. Main Line Health is committed to this level of excellence and will continue to build on these achievements within its expanding system.

References

1. American Nurses Credentialing Center, *The Magnet Recognition Program[®]* Application Manual. Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Credentialing Center; 2005.
2. Tugend A. Going to the hospital? Don't forget to pack a nurse. *New York Times*. September 17, 2005.
3. American Nurses Credentialing Center. A New Model for the ANCC's Magnet Recognition Program[®], March 2008. Retrieved <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Magnet/NewMagnetModel.aspx> Accessed, October 29, 2008.