

# Cooperation, Compassion and Innovation

An Interview with **K. Kelly Hancock, DNP, RN, NE-BC,**  
Executive Chief Nursing Officer, Cleveland Clinic Health System, and Chief Nursing Officer, Cleveland Clinic Main Campus

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dr. Kelly Hancock oversees the Chief Nursing Officers at Cleveland Clinic's ten regional hospitals and Cleveland Clinic Florida, along with serving as Chief Nursing Officer at Cleveland Clinic's Main Campus since July 2011. She is responsible for directing the clinical, academic and operational activities of the nursing staff throughout the health system, as well as the focus of nursing throughout the various institutes on the main campus. She



K. Kelly Hancock

administers and directs nursing integration and operations, as well as the financial, regulatory and business activities throughout the Nursing Institute. She has simultaneously been the Senior Nursing Director of Critical Care and the Nursing Director of the Heart and Vascular Institute, where she led the nursing practice for seven years. Dr. Hancock received her DNP from Chamberlain College of Nursing in 2015 and she obtained her MSN from Breen School of Nursing at Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio. She is a board certified Nurse Executive through the American Nurse Credentialing Center, a member of the American Organization of Nurse Executives, the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, and the Honor Society of Nursing - Sigma Theta Tau International. She was awarded Crain's Cleveland Business Notable Woman in Healthcare in 2018, the Sones/Folvaro for Excellence in Nursing Collaboration in 2017, the Distinguished Alumnae Award from Ursuline College in 2013, the ANCC Circle of Excellence Award in 2012, the 2010 Maria and Sam Miller Professional Excellence Nurse of the Year Award, is a recipient of the "Bruce Hubbard Stewart Fellow Award," and in 2002 and 2009 was awarded "The Abbie Porter Leadership Award" which highlights Nursing Leadership.

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Cleveland Clinic ([my.clevelandclinic.org](http://my.clevelandclinic.org)) is a nonprofit multispecialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. It was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of cooperation, compassion, and innovation. Cleveland Clinic has pioneered many medical breakthroughs, including coronary artery bypass surgery and the first face transplant in the United States. U.S. News &

World Report consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. More than 3,500 full-time salaried physicians and researchers and 11,000 nurses represent 120 medical specialties and subspecialties. The Cleveland Clinic Health System includes a main campus near downtown Cleveland and more than 75 Northern Ohio outpatient locations, including 19 full-service Family Health Centers, Cleveland Clinic Florida, the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Cleveland Clinic Canada and Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

## What makes Cleveland Clinic so special and have been the keys to its consistent leadership?

I've been with the organization for 25 years, so I have been fortunate to see it grow and evolve. We were founded by four physicians and continue to be a physician-led group practice. Doctors lead and run our hospital and institutes so we're not just a hospital that employs doctors.

Our colleagues are salaried and they don't get incentivized to see more patients. We're in it together behind the shared mission and vision of our organization.

We have about 25,000 nursing caregivers in the Nursing Institute. What makes us special is we have a culture that promotes our caregivers to seek excellence, whether in the clinical or quality domain. They constantly look to grow and develop, and are empowered to do so.

We have allowed this to be a culture where our caregivers can strive to be their best, no matter which department they're in. We all believe in the mission of the organization.

## How has the role of a nurse evolved?

The role of the professional nurse has evolved, not only at Cleveland Clinic, but across the country. We have always had to be clinically astute, but nursing has evolved to a point where we have many more hats to wear. Not only are we clinical caretakers, but we've become advocates, educators and liaisons, as well as social workers.

The patients we see now are facing more complex issues and they're living longer, so we're taking care of them across the entire care continuum.

The role of nursing, particularly in this transformation of healthcare, has extended beyond the four traditional walls of a hospital. It now reaches into the home. It can involve a nurse being on call or working a triage system via telephonic support. Nurses can work with Telehealth or out in our ambulatory clinics.

Our nurses really lead our care coordination efforts. They are coordinating care for patients in populations that are at risk and may require more resources from a healthcare provider.

We have nurses who are care coordinators for different specialties and they have different touchpoints with our patients along the entire care continuum. They are the liaison between those patients and the provider.

If someone comes to the emergency room or is hospitalized, the same nurse will continue to be the touchpoint with them to ensure that the plan of care we developed for the patient is being followed appropriately.

We're very fortunate to have an office of nursing research here. The scientists are all Ph.D. prepared and lead our efforts from a nursing standpoint. They do research at the clinic and take what they have learned and apply it at the bedside. This results in our nurses being able to see the value of continuing to be innovative and creative as well as having the latest tools and processes to care for our patients.

## What are the key attributes that you seek when hiring nurses?

We seek nurses who have innovative spirits and want to excel in their clinical outcomes, but who also excel from a patient experience perspective. We want our nurses to be leaders at the bedside who feel confident speaking up and leading the care they're delivering.

In addition, we have so many disciplines that might be involved in caring for a patient that a nurse has to be an open, flexible and collaborative partner in providing care. Today, we are a team of teams and know the value of taking the key talents from each of our team members and serving them well to our patients.

## With so many locations and facilities, is service consistency challenging?

No matter which location, patients and their families should and can expect the same level of clinical care, experience and competency from a clinic nurse.

The way we accomplish that is through standardization. We make sure that our policies and protocols are all evidence-based and that they are all standardized across the board. ●