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History of AACN

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Fact Sheet

Overview

Established in 1969 to help educate nurses working in newly developed intensive care units (ICUs), the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) has grown to become the world's largest specialty nursing organization. AACN represents the interests of more than half a million nurses who have the responsibility to care for acutely and critically ill patients. The association is dedicated to providing its members with the knowledge and resources necessary to provide optimal care to patients and families.

Mission

AACN drives excellence in acute and critical care for nurses, patients and families.

Key Priorities

- Clinical Practice: AACN shapes acute, progressive and critical care nursing practice.
- Education: AACN helps our community of nurses stay up-to-date.
- Certification: AACN validates nurses' knowledge and commitment to patient safety.
- Research: AACN invests in the future by supporting nursing research.
- Excellence: AACN honors nurses' accomplishments with various awards.

Membership by the Numbers

- About 130,000 acute, progressive and critical care nurses are AACN members, creating a community of exceptional nurses.
- AACN has nearly 200 chapters in the United States.
- About 70% of members care for patients at the bedside as frontline nurses.
- Almost 88% of members have earned a bachelor's or higher nursing degree.

Partnerships and Alliances

The Critical Care Societies Collaborative promotes the exchange of ideas about critical care practice and ICU patient care among leaders from medicine, nursing, pharmacy and respiratory therapy. This multidisciplinary member organization includes AACN, CHEST (American College of Chest Physicians), American Thoracic Society and Society of Critical Care Medicine.

AACN regularly partners with other nursing associations and healthcare organizations through strategic alliances and joint initiatives.

Leadership

Two boards of volunteer members provide strategic direction in collaboration with AACN's staff. These boards are led by:

- AACN President Rebekah Marsh, BSN, RN, CCRN (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026)
- AACN Certification Corporation Chair Jodi Berndt, PhD, RN, CCRN, PCCN, CNE, CNEcl, CHSE (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2028)

Key AACN leadership positions include:

- Chief Executive Officer Dana Woods, MBA
- Chief Clinical Officer Vicki Good, DNP, RN, FAAN, CENP, CPPS

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AACN at a Glance

AACN helps acute, progressive and critical care nurses stay up-to-date

AACN offers a wide array of opportunities through educational products, conferences and seminars:

- The annual National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exposition (NTI) is the premier clinical education program for nurses caring for acutely or critically ill patients. NTI includes the Critical Care Exposition, the largest and most comprehensive trade show for acute, progressive and critical care nurses.
- Quality online educational courses offer customized, interactive learning.
- Healthcare organizations across the country integrate AACN courses, including Essentials of Critical Care Orientation (ECCO), into their staff education curriculum.
- The AACN Critical Care Webinar Series offers online events with experts presenting the latest evidence-based learning and clinical practices in acute, progressive and critical care.
- Frequent online AACN blogs present diverse topics of interest.
- AACN podcasts: “Voices in Nursing,” “Leadership” and “COVID-19 Support” each feature thought-provoking, personal conversations with expert guests.
- Scholarships, a benefit of AACN membership, help members acquire knowledge and skills to enhance their personal and professional development, including higher education.

AACN shapes acute, progressive and critical care nursing practice

AACN is a leader in setting standards for acute, progressive and critical care nursing practice and education:

- “AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence,” the cornerstone of AACN’s Healthy Work Environment (HWE) initiative, provides healthcare organizations with a benchmark for patient safety and staff retention improvement efforts.
- Practice guidelines and scope and standards documents, including “AACN Standards for Appropriate Staffing in Adult Critical Care,” “AACN Standards for Appropriate Staffing in Adult Progressive Care” and “AACN Competence Framework for Progressive and Critical Care: Initial Competency 2022” define the scope of practice for many nursing roles, establish measurable standards of clinical practice and provide standards of professional performance.
- AACN Practice Alerts and clinical resources address key aspects of care for acutely and critically ill patients, providing evidence-based guidelines and up-to-date research information.
- AACN Clinical Scene Investigator (CSI) Academy is an experiential nursing leadership and innovation training program designed to empower hospital-based staff nurses as clinician leaders and change agents. Participants develop and implement initiatives in their hospital, addressing some of healthcare’s most challenging issues while measurably improving patient outcomes and hospital bottom lines.

- AACN also provides forums for our nursing community to ask colleagues for their opinions and pose questions on clinical matters, nursing leadership, and education and eLearning, among other topics.

AACN invests in the future by supporting nursing research

- Each year, \$160,000 in grants are awarded to nurse researchers for studies relevant to nursing care of acutely and critically ill patients and their families.
- The 2025 Nursing Innovations Fund offers grants of up to \$20,000 for projects that change systems to create healthy work environments that strengthen and diversify the nursing workforce. The program is a joint partnership between AARP and AACN.
- AACN encourages nursing research via the Participate in Research Studies webpage.
- AACN journals are nationally recognized sources of information on acute, progressive and critical care nursing:
 - *American Journal of Critical Care (AJCC)*, a bimonthly peer-reviewed scientific journal, offers leading-edge clinical research studies that focus on evidence-based-practice applications. The journal includes case reports, editorials and commentaries.
 - *Critical Care Nurse (CCN)*, a bimonthly, peer-reviewed clinical practice journal, provides current, relevant and useful information about the bedside care of critically and acutely ill patients. The journal offers columns on traditional and emerging issues in critical care, keeping nurses informed on topics that affect their practice in acute, progressive and critical care settings.
 - *AACN Advanced Critical Care* is a quarterly, peer-reviewed publication with in-depth articles intended for experienced critical care and acute care clinicians at the bedside, advanced practice nurses and clinical and academic educators.

AACN drives excellence by recognizing nurses' accomplishments

AACN's awards recognize nurses and support their professional advancement, both individually and as a team:

- The Circle of Excellence and other awards honor best practices in patient care.
- The Beacon Award for Excellence provides a road map and tools to assist hospital units in their efforts to improve every facet of patient care.

AACN Certification Corporation validates nurses' knowledge

AACN Certification Corporation, the credentialing arm of AACN, develops and administers more than 15 certification programs, offering exams for advanced practice nurses and nurses who seek to validate their knowledge in specialty and subspecialty practice areas.

- Currently, 132,000 unique certificants hold 145,000 specialty certifications, including CCRN, PCCN, ACNPC, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P and ACCNS-N, and CMC and CSC subspecialties.
- Micro-credentials support clinical excellence, enhance professional growth and promote patient safety by validating a focused subset of knowledge in a specific practice area. Current micro-credentials include sepsis, ECMO, and COVID-19 pulmonary and ventilator care.

About Critical Care Nursing

Definition of Critical Care Nursing

Critical care nursing is a specialty within nursing that deals specifically with human responses to life-threatening problems. Critical care nurses provide direct care or influence care for acutely/critically ill patients who are at high risk for actual or potential life-threatening health problems, regardless of the setting for their nursing care. Progressive care nurses provide direct care or influence care for acutely ill patients who are moderately stable with an elevated risk for instability. These patients require a high intensity of care and vigilance.

Definition of a Critically Ill Patient

Critically ill patients are at high risk for actual or potential life-threatening health problems. The more critically ill the patient is, the more likely they are to be highly vulnerable, unstable and complex, thereby requiring intense and vigilant nursing care.

Where Critical Care Nurses Work

The “2022 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses” notes that 61% of nurse respondents said they work in a hospital setting. Critical care nurses work wherever there are critically ill patients — intensive care units (ICUs), pediatric ICUs, neonatal ICUs, cardiac care units, cardiac catheter labs, telemetry units, teleICUs, progressive care units, emergency departments and recovery rooms. They also work in home healthcare, long-term acute care hospitals, managed care organizations, medical transport, nursing schools, outpatient surgery centers and clinics.

What Critical Care Nurses Do

Critical care nurses practice in settings where patients require complex assessment, high-intensity therapies and interventions, and continuous nursing vigilance. They rely on a specialized body of knowledge, skills and experience to provide care to patients and families, and create environments that are healing, humane and caring.

AACN defines advocacy as respecting and supporting the basic values, rights and beliefs of acutely and critically ill patients. As patient advocates, our community of nurses:

- Respects and supports the right of the patient or designated surrogate to autonomous, informed decision-making.
- Intervenes when the patient’s best interests are in question.
- Helps patients obtain necessary care.
- Respect the patient’s values, beliefs and rights.
- Provides education and support to help the patient or the patient’s designated surrogate make decisions.
- Represents the patient in accordance with the patient’s choices.
- Supports the decisions of the patient or designated surrogate, or transfers care to an equally qualified nurse.
- Intercedes for patients who cannot speak for themselves in situations that require immediate action.
- Monitors and safeguards the quality of care that patients receive.
- Acts as a liaison between the patient, the patient’s family and other healthcare professionals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Critical care nurses work in a wide variety of settings, filling many roles, including bedside clinicians, nurse educators, nurse researchers, nurse managers, clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners. With managed care and the migration of patients to alternative settings, these nurses are caring for patients who are more ill than ever before.

Managed care has also fueled a growing demand for advanced practice nurses in progressive care settings. Advanced practice nurses have earned advanced education at the master's or doctoral level. In critical care settings, they are most frequently CNSs or acute care nurse practitioners (ACNPs).

CNSs are expert clinicians in a particular specialty. They are responsible for identification, intervention and management of clinical problems to improve care for patients and families. CNSs provide direct patient care, including assessing, diagnosing, planning and prescribing pharmacological and nonpharmacological treatment of patients with health problems.

ACNPs focus on making clinical decisions related to complex patient care. Their activities include risk appraisal, interpretation of diagnostic tests and providing treatment, which may include prescribing medication.

Level of Education

To become a registered nurse (RN), an individual must earn a diploma in nursing, an associate degree in nursing (ADN) or a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and pass a national licensing exam. Requirements vary as determined by each state's board of nursing.

Many nursing schools offer students exposure to critical care, but most of a critical care nurse's specialty education and orientation is provided by the employer. Advanced practice nurses must earn a degree at the master's or doctoral level.

Board Certification

Although certification is not mandatory for practice in a specialty such as critical care, many nurses choose to become certified to challenge themselves, validate their knowledge and show their commitment to excellent patient care. Many employers prefer to hire certified nurses and some offer higher compensation, because these nurses have demonstrated acquisition of a specific high level of knowledge in their specialty through successful completion of a rigorous, psychometrically valid, job-related exam.

Certified nurses validate their continuing knowledge of current practices in progressive and critical care nursing through a renewal process that includes meeting continuing education and practice hour requirements.

Nursing Shortage and Orientation Programs

The nursing shortage has been especially acute in the specialty areas of nursing, as noted in the high number of requests for temporary and traveling critical care nurses to fill staffing gaps. These requests are more pronounced for adult critical care units, pediatric and neonatal ICUs and

emergency departments. Many hospitals are launching critical care orientation and internship programs to prepare experienced and newly licensed nurses. eLearning orientation programs include “Essentials of Critical Care Orientation” (ECCO), “Essentials of Pediatric Critical Care Orientation” (EPCCO) and “Essentials of Neonatal Critical Care Orientation” (ENCCO) to help meet these needs.

History of Critical Care Nursing

Although there have always been very ill and severely injured patients, the concept of critical care is relatively modern. As advances were made in medicine and technology, patient care became more complex. To provide appropriate care, nurses needed specialized knowledge and skills, and care delivery mechanisms evolved to support patients’ needs for continuous monitoring and treatment. The first ICUs emerged in the 1950s to provide care for very ill patients who needed one-on-one care from a nurse. From this environment the specialty of critical care nursing emerged.

Future of Critical Care Nursing

Rapid advances in healthcare and technology have contributed to keeping more people out of the hospital. However, patients in critical care units are often more ill than ever. Many patients who would have been cared for in a critical care unit many years ago are now being cared for on medical floors, at long-term acute care facilities or at home. Many patients in today’s ICUs would not have survived in the past. It has been proposed that hospitals of the future will be large critical care units, and other types of care will be provided in alternative locations or at home.

Critical care nurses need to keep pace with the latest information and develop skills to manage new treatment methods and technologies. As issues relating to patient care increase in complexity and new technologies and treatments continue to be introduced, critical care nurses need to become even more knowledgeable.

History of AACN

- 1969 American Association of Cardiovascular Nurses (AACN) is established to help educate nurses working in newly developed ICUs.
- 1971 AACN changes its name to American Association of Critical-Care Nurses to reflect the diverse complexities of patients who are acutely or critically ill.
- 1974 AACN holds the first annual National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exposition (NTI), which soon becomes the premier conference for acute and critical care nurses.
- 1975 AACN Certification Corporation, the credentialing arm of AACN, is founded to maintain professional practice excellence through certification and certification renewal of nurses whose practice focuses on the care of acutely and critically ill patients and their families.
- 1976 CCRN critical care specialty certification is offered for nurses caring for acutely and/or critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.
- 1980 *Critical Care Nurse*, a bimonthly clinical practice journal, is launched to provide current, relevant and useful information on the bedside care of acutely and critically ill patients.
- 1990 *AACN Clinical Issues in Critical Care Nursing* premieres as a quarterly journal with in-depth articles for experienced acute and critical care clinicians at the bedside, advanced practice nurses, and clinical and academic educators.
- 1992 *American Journal of Critical Care*, a bimonthly scientific and research journal, debuts, providing evidence-based multidisciplinary knowledge for acute and critical care.
- 1999 CCNS specialty certification is introduced for acute/critical care CNSs educated at the graduate level to provide care to adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.
- 2002 A white paper, “Safeguarding the Patient and the Profession: The Value of Critical Care Nurse Certification,” is released on the benefits that certification brings to the public, employers and nurses.
- “Scope of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for the Acute and Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist” is released.
- “Essentials of Critical Care Orientation” (ECCO), an eLearning course, is offered for novice nurses and as a review for experienced nurses.
- 2003 The Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence program is introduced with tools to assist critical care units on their path to excellence, honoring individual units that excel in all aspects of patient care.
- 2004 PCCN specialty certification debuts for progressive care nurses caring for acutely ill adults.
- “National Critical Care Survey” is completed, the first survey to provide data on critical care units and the environments in which critical care nurses work.

- 2005 CMC subspecialty certification is launched for certified nurses providing bedside care to acutely and critically ill adult cardiac patients.
- CSC subspecialty certification is launched for certified nurses providing bedside care to acutely and critically ill adult patients during the first 48 hours after cardiac surgery.
- “Basic ECG Interpretation,” an eLearning course, is offered to equip nurses with essential knowledge to quickly identify potential cardiac threats and respond appropriately.
- “AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence” is published with six standards for an HWE.
- 2006 The Beacon Award expands to include progressive care units.
- The results of “RN Work Environment Survey,” conducted with *Nursing Spectrum* and Bernard Hodes Group, are released.
- AACN Clinical Issues*, AACN’s quarterly journal, is renamed *AACN Advanced Critical Care*. The journal now publishes unsolicited as well as solicited articles and includes seven regular columns.
- 2007 ACNPC specialty certification is launched for ACNPs educated at the graduate level to provide care for adult patients.
- CCRN-E specialty certification is introduced as a renewal option for nurses primarily working in a teleICU monitoring acutely and critically ill adult patients from a remote location.
- “Essentials of Nurse Manager Orientation,” an online, self-paced eLearning course for nurse managers, is offered in collaboration with the American Organization of Nurse Executives.
- 2008 AACN publishes its first Practice Alerts to guide nursing practice within the context of an HWE. They form the foundation of a growing library of clinical resources from AACN with the latest evidence-based resources and research.
- The Beacon Award criteria is expanded to add pediatric units.
- CNML certification for nurse managers and leaders is offered in partnership with AONE Credentialing Center.
- “The Preceptor Challenge” eLearning program debuts, allowing nurses to practice essential precepting skills in a virtual hospital-based environment.
- “Promoting Excellence in Palliative and End-of-Life Care,” an eLearning program, is introduced. The innovative course simulates being in a patient’s room with family members, so nurses can practice different approaches.
- “AACN Scope and Standards for Acute and Critical Care Nursing Practice” is published.
- 2009 The first issue of *AACN Bold Voices*, a monthly member magazine, is published, featuring clinical articles, the AACN president’s column, interviews and news on AACN initiatives.
- “Essentials of Pediatric Critical Care Orientation” (EPCCO), an online introduction to pediatric critical care developed by Children’s Hospital Association, is launched.

- 2010 An online HWE assessment tool is introduced for hospital and unit teams to measure the health of their work environment against AACN’s six standards.
- The Beacon Award for Excellence is revised to be a three-year, three-level award with gold, silver and bronze designations. The updated criteria are designed to mark a significant milestone on a unit’s path to exceptional patient care and achieving an HWE.
- 2011 CCRN-E certification is now offered as an initial option, in addition to renewal, for nurses who primarily work remotely.
- Results of “The Silent Treatment” study, conducted with VitalSmarts and Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN), are presented. The study addresses the concerns of nurses and other healthcare personnel that are often not discussed and contribute to avoidable medical errors.
- AACN Impact Research Grants are first offered, with funding of up to \$50,000 each for projects that address AACN research priorities.
- The Critical Care Societies Collaborative (CCSC) partners with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop an awards program to recognize notable, sustained improvements in preventing healthcare-associated infections – specifically infections in critical care. During the three-year partnership, more than 80 hospitals are recognized for their efforts.
- 2012 AACN introduces AACN Clinical Scene Investigator (CSI) Academy, a hospital-based nurse leadership and innovation training program. By year’s end, teams of nurses at hospitals in Indianapolis, Boston and Raleigh, North Carolina, are participating in the 16-month program.
- “AACN Scope and Standards for Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Practice” is published.
- “AACN: Acute and Critical Care Pharmacology” – an online course developed in collaboration with American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and Elsevier Clinical Solutions – covers safe administration of medications commonly used in acute and critical care.
- The first issue of *CriticalCare eNewsline*, an online newsletter, is published.
- 2013 AACN Critical Care Webinar Series debuts, offering free monthly webinars with nationally recognized subject matter experts.
- The first AACN CSI Academy participants present their clinical and fiscal outcomes at an Innovation Conference in Indianapolis. Their project materials are available on the AACN website. AACN expands the program to hospitals in New York City, Philadelphia and Austin, Texas.
- AACN Certification Corporation introduces ACCNS-AG and ACCNS-P certification programs for CNSs who care for adult-gerontology and pediatric patients and ACNPC-AG certification for ACNPs who care for adult-gerontology patients. The updated certifications are among the first to reflect the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education, which establishes the first national standards for uniform regulation of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in all states.

- 2014 AACN Certification Corporation adds a new Consensus Model-based advanced practice certification for acute care CNSs who care for neonatal patients (ACCNS-N). All AACN advanced practice certifications now align with the Consensus Model.
- AACN membership tops 100,000.
- Seven hospitals in Seattle are selected to participate in AACN CSI Academy.
- Dana Woods, longtime AACN senior director, becomes CEO upon the retirement of Wanda Johanson, who led AACN for 15 years.
- “AACN TeleICU Nursing Practice Guidelines,” the first authoritative document to define guidelines for the emerging subspecialty of teleICU nursing practice, is published.
- “AACN Scope and Standards for Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist Practice” is published.
- CCRN-K certification is launched for nurses who influence the care delivered to acutely and critically ill patients but do not primarily provide direct care.
- “ACCNS-AG Certification Review Course” is introduced for adult-gerontology CNSs.
- As part of CCSC, AACN supports ABIM Foundation’s Choosing Wisely initiative by identifying five routine critical care practices that may not be necessary or could be harmful.
- 2015 CSI Academy adds nine Phoenix-area hospitals in the Banner Health System as the eighth regional cohort.
- The new edition of “AACN Scope and Standards for Acute and Critical Care Nursing Practice” incorporates advances in scientific knowledge, clinical practice, technology and other changes in the dynamic healthcare environment.
- 2016 Employee feedback company Quantum Workplace – known for its Best Places to Work contest – recognizes AACN with its Employee Voice Award for achieving high levels of employee engagement.
- AACN CSI Academy adds eight hospitals in San Diego as the ninth regional cohort.
- The second edition of “AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence” is published, reaffirming AACN’s commitment to improve the environments in which nurses work. The standards are now supported by additional research and new evidence confirming the link between HWEs and optimal outcomes for patients, healthcare professionals and organizations.
- A new version of AACN’s online orientation course for critical care nurses, “Essentials of Critical Care Orientation” (ECCO), debuts. Since its launch in 2002, more than 1,100 hospitals and healthcare facilities in the U.S. and Canada have used ECCO to support their critical care orientation and classroom-based education programs. Over 92,000 nurses have successfully completed the course.
- PCCN-K certification is introduced for progressive care nurses who influence the care delivered to acutely/critically ill patients but do not primarily provide direct care.

In collaboration with CCSC members, AACN co-publishes a report on burnout syndrome in critical care healthcare professionals. “Burnout in Critical Care – A Critical Situation” provides guidance on mitigating this syndrome and calls for initiating research to examine burnout prevention and treatment.

As part of ongoing efforts to standardize clinical practice and improve patient outcomes, AACN updates several Practice Alerts, including those related to cardiac monitoring and preventing healthcare-associated infections.

2017 The first phase of AACN CSI Academy concludes, with almost 250 nurses at 66 hospitals participating. The positive fiscal impact is estimated at nearly \$35 million. With nearly 43,000 unique downloads of project materials, AACN’s online library of CSI Innovation Projects has become a resource for hospitals worldwide.

AACN releases “Essentials of Neonatal Critical Care Orientation” (ENCCO), an online program that provides foundational nursing education to care for neonatal patients, including babies in the newborn nursery and critically ill patients in the neonatal ICU.

For the second year, AACN is recognized with Quantum Workplace’s Employee Voice Award for achieving the highest level of engagement in the small-sized organization category for its employee survey.

More than 100,000 certified acute and critical care nurses hold AACN Certification Corporation’s credentials.

2018 “AACN TeleICU Nursing Practice: An Expert Consensus Statement Supporting High Acuity, Progressive and Critical Care” is published as an update to AACN’s landmark teleICU nursing standards. The document offers recommendations for the development, growth and enhancement of teleICU programs, with real-world clinical scenarios.

NTI closes registration in advance of the conference for the first time in its 44-year history, after more than 8,500 attendees register for the sold-out conference.

Nurse researchers have received more than \$1 million in funding from AACN through its Impact Research Grant program, ensuring a pipeline for evidence-based resources in support of a wide range of AACN priorities.

2019 Founded in 1969, AACN celebrates 50 years of acute and critical care nursing excellence, serving more than 120,000 members and 200 chapters in the United States. AACN celebrates all that nurses have accomplished during the last half century, while honoring their past, present and future impact on the evolution of acute and critical care nursing.

AACN releases a new practice alert, “Assessing Pain in Critically Ill Adults,” which summarizes expected nursing practice related to pain assessment, including evidence-based recommendations and supporting documentation.

Results from AACN’s fourth national survey of critical care nurses are included in April’s *Critical Care Nurse*. “Critical Care Nurse Work Environments 2018: Findings and Implications” reports key findings from the survey of over 8,000 nurses, compares the results with previous studies and recommends areas for continued improvement.

In August, “AACN Scope and Standards for Progressive and Critical Care Nursing Practice” is released. The booklet describes and measures the expected level of practice and professional performance for progressive and critical care RNs.

AACN and StoryCorps collaborate with nurses to record their conversations for the AACN Nurse Stories Project.

2020 The national office closes in mid-March when state authorities issue a stay-at-home order due to COVID-19, which will become a global pandemic. Employees work from home until further notice.

AACN develops and offers many new resources – including blogs on stress, leadership, clinical issues and other topics, and a podcast series – to support critical care nurses on the front lines of the pandemic. More than 120,000 nurses sign up for “COVID-19 Pulmonary, ARDS and Ventilator Resources,” a free online course.

Amid concerns for the health and safety of staff and participants, NTI in Indianapolis, in May, is canceled because of COVID-19 and, in September, the decision is made that NTI 2021 will be a virtual conference.

AACN releases “The Fight Against COVID-19: A Call to Action for America” in collaboration with other healthcare organizations. The statement outlines three areas that require urgent attention: personal protective equipment; lifesaving equipment, medications and supplies; and stopping the spread. We’ve engaged in many other advocacy items, including sending a board member to the White House to meet with the administration to advocate for PPE and other lifesaving equipment for nurses.

AACN partners with DearWorld.org – an organization that documents pivotal events with moving portraits and stories – to share nurses’ experiences. As nurses become the storytellers, it helps them bolster resilience, find gratitude and celebrate each other.

AACN releases “Essentials of Critical Care Orientation” (ECCO) 4.0 to provide progressive and critical care nursing orientation education in a safe online learning environment.

AACN partners with leading nursing organizations on the Well-Being Initiative, which provides nurses with free tools and resources to support their mental health and well-being.

2021 In early 2021, AACN recognizes 208 units from 149 hospitals that earned the Beacon Award for Excellence between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2020. The award honors hospital units that employ evidence-based practices to improve patient and family outcomes.

AACN releases “AACN Scope and Standards of Adult-Gerontology and Pediatric Acute Care Nurse Practitioners 2-21, which describes the expected level of practice and professional performance of acute care nurse practitioners (ACNPs), incorporating advances in scientific knowledge, clinical practice, advocacy, health equity and other changes in the dynamic healthcare environment.

Because of COVID-19, NTI 2021 is a virtual conference for the first time. NTI offers a fully immersive, interactive conference experience May 24-27. Attendees have 24/7 access to concurrent clinical and professional development sessions, inspirational

keynotes, ExpoEd exhibitor education, and new and different ways to make meaningful connections with other attendees.

AACN releases “National Nurse Work Environments - October 2021: A Status Report.” The health of nurse work environments affects both patient and nurse outcomes. In 2005, AACN published “AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence” and a second edition in 2016. AACN conducted critical care nurse work environment studies in 2006, 2008, 2013, 2018 and October 2021, which was expanded to include RNs in all areas of practice.

In November, AACN released a guide to help those who have been vaccinated to engage in constructive conversations with family members and friends who are hesitant about the vaccine. The toolkit is part of AACN’s Hear Us Out campaign to report nurses’ reality from the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and urge those who are unvaccinated to reconsider.

2022

In recognition of nurses’ dedication during the pandemic, the Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society and the Major League Baseball Team Physicians Association award grants to more than 80 progressive care and critical care nurses pursuing CCRN or PCCN specialty nursing certification. This generous donation marks the first time AACN professional development scholarships are available to support its nursing certification programs.

AACN collaborates with American Nurses Association, American Organization for Nursing Leadership, Healthcare Financial Management Association and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement to launch the Nurse Staffing Think Tank. The group publishes a set of priorities and recommendations that provide immediate strategies that can be feasibly implemented in the short term to help address the nurse staffing crisis.

For the first time, AACN’s National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exposition is offered in a hybrid format, with both in-person (Houston) and virtual options.

“AACN Competence Framework for Progressive and Critical Care: Initial Competency 2022” is published to establish the standard for entry-level nurse competency. Using this framework, preceptors and managers can confidently determine that a nurse who is new to an ICU or PCU practice area is ready to transition from orientation to more independent patient assignments.

2023

“AACN Core Curriculum for High Acuity, Progressive, and Critical Care Nursing” is honored as Book of the Year by *American Journal of Nursing* in the Critical Care-Emergency Nursing category. Category judge Bridgid G. Joseph, DNP, RN, CCNS wrote that the eighth edition of this definitive resource is “a superb reference for nurses in critical care.”

AACN publishes the practice alert “Manual Prone Positioning in Adults: Reducing the Risk of Harm Through Evidence-Based Practices.” Prone positioning can present complications. This practice alert aims to standardize proning best practices while minimizing the risk of injury.

AACN establishes a special version of CSI Academy to focus on the implementation of its Healthy Work Environment standards. The initial cohort includes nurses from Los Angeles General Medical Center and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. The program is set to

encompass up to 80 teams from hospitals in Ohio, Oregon, Delaware, Texas and Washington.

AACN introduces a new mission statement that reflects our commitment to our nurse community: AACN drives excellence in acute and critical care for nurses, patients and families. The goal of AACN remains steadfast: to inspire every nurse in our community of acute, progressive and critical care nurses to discover personal connections, pursue clinical advancement and cultivate a deeper sense of purpose in their service to patients and families.

2024

AACN develops new resources to support clinicians who care for patients receiving extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), including an online course and a micro-credential. The online course is presented in collaboration with The Institute for Extracorporeal Life Support.

AACN launches its online Knowledge Assessment Tool to assist in onboarding critical care and progressive care nurses. This tool identifies knowledge gaps and educational needs of new nurses by randomly generating questions in alignment with one of AACN's most popular courses, Essentials of Critical Care Orientation.

AACN partners with AARP and the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, an initiative of AARP Foundation, AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to offer the 2024 Health Equity and Nursing Innovation Project Grants: Nursing Workforce and Healthy Work Environments.

“AACN Standards for Appropriate Staffing in Adult Critical Care” outlines seven standards for staffing, including actions for leaders and nurses as well as suggested exemplars, tools and resources.

The National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exhibition (NTI) in Denver, May 20-22, marks AACN's 50th NTI. AACN president Terry Davis says, “For five decades, AACN has been at the forefront of providing education on the issues and topics impacting critical and progressive care and nursing practice. At NTI 2024, we'll honor our past while reimagining the future.” AACN also offers Virtual NTI, June 11-14.

An updated AACN Practice Alert, “Facilitating Family Presence During Resuscitation and Invasive Procedures Throughout the Life Span,” is published following the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency, which required widespread visitation restrictions. The practice alert summarizes evidence to support and welcome families who wish to be present during resuscitation, invasive procedures and other vulnerable health events.

AACN launches a Sepsis Micro-Credential to support the clinical practice of healthcare professionals providing direct care to patients with or at risk of developing sepsis.

AACN partners with Adtalem Global Education to offer “Critical Care Nursing Practice Ready Specialty Focused,” a course for Bachelor of Science Nursing students at Chamberlain University.

AACN releases the final episode of the AACN Leadership podcast and debuts its new Voices in Nursing podcast.

AACN honors 305 units from 186 hospitals with the Beacon Award for Excellence. To establish the most current and relevant benchmark data (compiled from all participating units), the Beacon Award is now given annually. This frequency allows AACN to provide units with a quantifiable comparison of performance in relation to other units that submit their data.

As part of its commitment to address the ongoing nursing shortage, AACN partners with the Organization for Associate Degree Nursing to establish an annual scholarship program for associate degree nursing students interested in pursuing critical care after graduation.

“AACN Procedure Manual for Progressive and Critical Care,” 8th edition, edited by Karen L. Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN, earned a 2024 *AJN* Book of the Year Award (1st Place, Critical Care – Emergency Nursing). Published by Elsevier, this essential resource provides evidence-based procedures to enhance patient safety and nursing practice. (awarded in 2025).

Applications for the 2025 Beacon Award for Excellence open. Units who completed a Healthy Work Environment Assessment (HWEAT) in 2024 are eligible to apply for this year’s award via the Beacon application portal. Informational sessions are also available for those interested in the Beacon Award program.

“AACN Scope and Standards for Progressive Care Nursing Practice,” an up-to-date, evidence-based guide, serves as a practical tool to understand and advance the scope and value of progressive care nurses, who provide and/or influence care for acutely ill patients who are moderately stable but at an elevated risk of instability.

“AACN Standards for Appropriate Staffing in Adult Progressive Care” offers guidance to improve some of the many processes that affect appropriate staffing in adult progressive care units. The seven standards offer specific actions, exemplars, tools and resources that support nurses and enhance patient care.

AACN presents the National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exposition in New Orleans, May 19-21, and virtually June 9-11. AACN President Jennifer Adamski says, “AACN is a community of exceptional nurses who have the Courage to Soar. It takes courage for nurses to step up to advocate for patients, families, our colleagues and ourselves.”