

## Member Spotlight

# Bringing in the Inside Expert

## SCCM Award Honors Interactive Family-Centered Care

From its inception, the Weinberg surgical intensive care unit (WICU) at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, has acknowledged the vital role of “the expert in the room” – the patient’s family. Since it opened in 2000, the 20-bed intensive care unit (ICU) has offered round-the-clock visiting hours and included families on daily rounds. Taking that inclusive culture one step further, families are now invited to assist with their loved one’s care. These innovative efforts earned the WICU this year’s Family-Centered Care Innovation Award, presented by the Society of Critical Care Medicine at its 43rd Critical Care Congress.

Award team leader Rhonda Malone Wyskiel, BSN, RN, and former WICU nurse clinician, said her reasons for seeking team recognition are very personal. “Eleven years ago, my mother was in an ICU, and I wasn’t allowed to touch her or be with her for more than a short visit,” Wyskiel remembered. “I was told not to ask any questions, and she died due to a medical error. I decided then that I couldn’t let [my experience] happen to anyone else.”

Hand in hand with its open visiting hours policy, the WICU folds family members into daily rounds, having them join a standing circle with physicians and nurses, sometimes around the patient’s bed. All questions are welcome. WICU staff also will bring family members to the bedside during emergency situations, if they wish. “That got us thinking about other ways [families] could be in the room,” Wyskiel said. “Every year, we’ve thought of new ways to include them, to utilize that expert resource.”

From 2008 to 2010, the WICU team developed and launched the Family Meeting Project, in which the family of any patient who has been on the unit for more than seven days meets formally with the patient’s surgeon, intensivist, nurse, and social worker for a status update and to discuss care goals and next steps. Families can continue to request these meetings, since care goals and outcomes may shift the longer a patient remains in the ICU, Wyskiel explained.

### Family Care Affair

In 2010, Wyskiel took her personal quest for family-centered care even further by creating and piloting the WICU Family Involvement Menu. Family members are invited to choose from 10 daily care activities in which they can participate, options ranging from shaving or feeding assistance to pillow repositioning or range-of-motion exercises. The family is also encouraged to suggest any assistance that may not be listed. Nurses provide instruction and supervision for all daily care, although family members often become adept enough to handle the activities on their own.

To develop the menu, staff were asked to reflect on what they would want if they were ICU patients and to consider the most appropriate for family participation. At the same time, the team surveyed 12 families on their interest in becoming more involved in their loved ones’ daily needs. The results have been “nothing short of stunning,” Wyskiel reported.

She added that family involvement now is becoming an ICU expectation. “We shouldn’t say that we ‘allow’ families to participate in the ICU,” she said. “It should be expected.” Such involvement forges a needed link to



Weinberg surgical intensive care unit (WICU) staff members (left to right) Sam Young, Donna Prow, Carol Maddrey, Rhonda Wyskiel, and Amy Plotts.

family education about post-acute care as well. “If we didn’t treat the family member as an expert from the beginning, we might miss medication information, for example,” she said. “Family members have great insight into compliance – [their knowledge] can prevent readmissions or other problems.”

### What it Takes

Presentations on the WICU’s work have garnered national and international requests to “send the tool.” However, Wyskiel cautioned that “it’s not a tool, it’s a process. How you get to engaged families and staff will be unique to your unit – it has to be owned and created by your ICU.” She advised a three-step process: “First, understand your unit culture relative to patient- and family-centeredness. Ask patients if they would like more

involvement. Ask staff if they would find such assistance helpful. Look at what you already have in place and think what the next logical step would be. Next, gather baseline data on existing processes. And finally, if the readiness is there, adapt what we have done based on what you learn from the first step.”

Although Wyskiel said the unit is constantly seeking innovation, she is pleased with the evolving team care approach. “Families love it,” she said. “It makes them feel empowered, and a better sense of trust and respect has developed between caregivers and family members. If it can facilitate a conversation that gets the family more involved in a patient’s care, or give clinicians something to think about that they hadn’t before, with all enjoying the reciprocity of working together, my work is done.” ▲

## SCCM Awards Recognize Excellence in Patient and Family Care

The Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) offers two prestigious awards that recognize dedication to patient- and family-centered care.

### ICU Heroes Award

The new ICU Heroes Award is offered to an intensive care unit (ICU) patient, family, and the multiprofessional ICU team that delivered the care. Applicants are asked to share the patient’s story with a focus on attention to patient- and family-centered aspects of care. The patient and the ICU team leader will receive a medal, and the ICU team and the patient’s family will receive a commemorative plaque. Complementary travel and registration to SCCM’s Critical Care Congress also will be provided to select award recipients. *The deadline to submit an application for the ICU Heroes Award is August 1.*

### Family-Centered Care Innovation Award

The Family-Centered Care Innovation Award is presented to a unit or program that demonstrates novel, effective methods of providing care to critically ill and injured patients and their families. The awarded team will receive a commemorative plaque and one free registration to SCCM’s Critical Care Congress. Up to two other teams will receive honorable mention, which includes recognition and a plaque. *The deadline to submit an application for the Family-Centered Care Innovation Award is August 1.*

Application submissions and questions related to these awards may be directed to SCCM staff member Kathleen Ward at [kward@sccm.org](mailto:kward@sccm.org). Learn more at [www.sccm.org/awards](http://www.sccm.org/awards).