

**Title:**

H 05 SPECIAL SESSION: 2018 AACN Critical Care Work Environment Survey Results: Implementing the HWE Standards Matters!

**Keywords:**

healthy work environment, nurse and patient outcomes and safety

**Description/Overview:**

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses' (AACN) 4th national work environment survey revealed compelling data from over 8000 RNs related to the health of acute and critical care work environments. This presentation highlights these findings, particularly focusing on new data showing the impact of implementing the six essential HWE standards.

**Abstract Text:**

Registered nurses are uniquely positioned to evaluate and impact the environment in which patients are cared for in hospitals. At the interface of patient care, nurses spend more time in hands-on patient care than any other discipline. RNs, however, do not work in isolation. Serving as orchestrators, nurses coordinate timely contributions of members of the interprofessional healthcare team in an environment that is fast-paced and pressure laden. Therefore, it is important that hospitals intentionally implement effective processes that allow nurses and all healthcare professionals to work to their highest potential in work environments that are safe, healing, and respectful of the rights and contributions of all members of the team.

After extensively surveying the work environment in which acute and critical care nurses practice, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) boldly committed to advocating for work environments that promote excellence in patient care and support all members of the healthcare team in experiencing fulfillment from their work. In 2005, AACN released the *AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence*. This seminal document describes essential standards that must be in place to achieve healthy work environments. The six standards are skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership. The second edition of the AACN standards, published in 2016, demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the six standards and additional substantiating evidence confirming the inextricable link between healthy work environments and optimal outcomes for patients, health care professionals, and health care organizations. The AACN healthy work environment standards, and their associated critical elements, have been identified as an important blueprint that organizations and nurses can use to foster a workplace that promotes optimal patient outcomes and where nurses and other members of the healthcare team are fulfilled in their work (AACN, 2016).

Evidence continues to mount demonstrating the relationship between healthy work environments and optimal outcomes for patients, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Nurses who practice in unhealthy work environments consistently report a lower quality of patient care and a poorer hospital reputation (Lake et al., 2016; Wei, Sewell, Woody, & Rose, 2018). Unhealthy work environments are also associated with higher incidences of hospital acquired conditions, patient mortality, failure to rescue, and hospital readmission rates (Aiken et al., 2011; Buhlman, 2016; Lasater & McHugh, 2016; McHugh, et al., 2016). Equally disturbing, unhealthy work environments contribute to dissatisfaction, low morale, and staff turnover (McHugh & Ma, 2016). Furthermore, research indicates that spending more money on resources such as increased staffing has little benefit in the presence of an unhealthy work environment (Aiken et al., 2011). Despite mounting evidence confirming the importance of healthy work environments in the delivery of high quality patient care and staff well-being, nurses continue to report workplaces that are unhealthy at an unacceptable frequency. These unhealthy work environments contribute to stress, burnout, and moral distress in all members of the healthcare team as well as negative consequences for patients and families (Koy, Yunibhand, Angsuroch, and Fisher, 2015; Van Bogaert, et al., 2014). A bold, intentional and coordinated effort is needed to create and sustain healthy work environments that foster excellence in patient care and optimal outcomes for patients, nurses, and other members of the healthcare team.

This session provides an overview of the six essential AACN Healthy Work Environment Standards and the associated critical elements for implementation. Results from a large 2018 national work environment survey are discussed in conjunction with trends over time. Compelling evidence is described demonstrating the importance of implementing these standards. In addition, actionable suggestions are presented that can be readily implemented to help develop and sustain healthy work environments.

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**Content Outline:**

I. Introduction

a. Brief background on AACN's work in promoting healthy work environments

b. AACN Healthy Work Environment Standards and associated critical elements

## II. AACN Research

a. 2018 Critical Care Nurse Work Environment Survey Results

b. Trends over time, 2006, 2008, 2013, and 2018 results

c. Implementation gap: Comparison of units that are on the HWE implementation journey versus those who have not implemented the standards

### Moderator

Maridulce Belen Santos Fortuno, MS, BSN, RN, CAPA  
University of Maryland Medical Center  
Department of Perioperative Services, PREP Center  
Senior Clinical Nurse I  
Baltimore MD  
USA

**Professional Experience:** The presenter has over 30 years of nursing experience in multiple practice settings. She has held a wide range of roles, including positions as an inpatient surgical clinical nurse, critical care nurse, perioperative nurse, cardiology/medical device research nurse, clinical faculty for diploma nursing education, and has worked in nursing management. She graduated with her Diploma in Nursing from Union Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in 1987, and has since furthered her nursing education where she was conferred with a Masters of Science in Health Leadership and Services Management – Executive Practice in 2014 from University of Maryland School of Nursing.

**Author Summary:** In her approximately 10 years of nursing management experience, the speaker has been responsible for developing and mentoring both licensed and un-licensed personnel and understands the challenges of positively motivating staff. She currently practices as a Senior Clinical Nurse in a pre-surgical testing center in a tertiary care academic medical center in Baltimore, Maryland.

### Organizer

Linda Cassidy, MSN, EdM, CCNS, CCRN-K, RN, CCNS, CCRN-K  
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
Strategic Advocacy  
Clinical Practice Specialist  
Aliso Viejo CA  
USA

**Professional Experience:** Coordinating Editor of the 2nd edition of AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence, 2nd edition. Researcher in healthy work environments. National speaker on work environments.

**Author Summary:** Linda Cassidy is a Clinical Practice Specialist at the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. She served as the coordinating editor for the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence, 2nd edition. Linda's research focus is on the impact of the work environment on nurse, healthcare professionals and patient/family outcomes and she is a nationally known speaker on healthy work environments.

**Any relevant financial relationships?** Yes

Relationship	Description of Potential Conflict
Employed by AACN	I am a employee of AACN and will be presenting AACN information.

Signed on 09/03/2018 by *Linda Cassidy*

## Organizer

Connie Barden, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, CCNS  
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
Chief Clinical Officer  
Aliso Viejo CA  
USA

**Professional Experience:** Executive Editor of the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence, 1st and 2nd Editions. Served on the original workgroup Current Chief Clinical Officer of AACN. Past National President of AACN; National speaker on healthy work environments.

**Author Summary:** Connie Barden is the Chief Clinical Officer at the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN). She served as the Executive Editor of the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments: A Journey to Excellence, editions 1 and 2. Connie served as past national president of AACN and is a nationally known speaker on healthy work environments and other topics of interest to acute and critical care nurses.

**Any relevant financial relationships?** Yes

Relationship	Description of Potential Conflict
Employed by AACN	I am a employee of AACN and will be presenting AACN information.

Signed on 09/03/2018 by *Connie Barden*

## Organizer

Beth Ulrich, EdD, RN, FACHE, FAAN  
Cizik School of Nursing, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston  
Department of Graduate Studies  
Professor  
Pearland TX  
USA

**Professional Experience:** Beth Ulrich is a nationally recognized thought leader known for her research studying nursing work environments and the experiences of new graduate nurses as they transition from nursing school into the workforce Dr. Ulrich has extensive experience as a healthcare executive, educator, and researcher. She currently serves as Professor Cizik School of Nursing at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, and as Editor of the Nephrology Nursing Journal, the official journal of the American Nephrology Nurses' Association (ANNA). Dr. Ulrich has been a co-investigator on a series of national nursing workforce and work environment studies, on four studies of critical care nurse work environments conducted for the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, and the primary investigator on two ANNA national studies - Assessing the Patient Safety Culture in Nephrology Nurse Practice Settings and The Health & Safety of Nephrology Nurses and the Environments in Which They Work.

**Author Summary:** Beth Ulrich is a nationally recognized thought leader known for her research studying nursing work environments. Dr. Ulrich, a professor at the Cizik School of Nursing in Houston, has been a co-investigator on a series of national nursing workforce and work environment studies and on four studies of critical care nurse work environments conducted for the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. Her book, Mastering Precepting, was named a 2012 AJN Book of the Year.