



THE lamp LIGHTER

Methodist Hospitals Nurse Newsletter • March 2026

CNO MESSAGE: *Guest Column by Vikas George*

EMPATHY: The Human Connection in Healing



Vikas George,
Director of Patient
Experience &
Organizational
Development

Empathy remains a timeless differentiator in healthcare that humanizes care, strengthens relationships, and elevates the patient experience. At Methodist Hospitals, where we are committed to Healing Northwest Indiana, empathy is not an “extra.” It is central to who we are as healthcare professionals.

In today’s environment of advancing technology, clinical protocols, and increasing efficiency demands, empathy remains the bridge

between treatment and healing. Patients who feel heard and understood report less anxiety, greater trust and more confidence in their care. Hospitals that foster an empathetic culture often see stronger nurse communication scores, improved responsiveness ratings, and fewer complaints.

Just as importantly, empathy strengthens professional resilience. Research shows nurses who step into their patients’ shoes, demonstrate genuine understanding and translate that insight into compassionate and effective care experience greater job satisfaction and less burnout.

For patients facing fear, pain, or uncertainty, small actions can make a lasting difference. A few intentional steps can help each of us deepen empathy in daily practice:

Be fully present.

Make eye contact. Sit at the bedside when possible. Take the time to listen without interruption.

Practice active listening.

Reflect back on what patients or family members are telling you: “It sounds like you’re worried about...” This simple technique reassures patients that their concerns matter.

Acknowledge emotions.

Statements such as, “I can see this is overwhelming,” validate feelings and build trust.

Personalize interactions.

Use the patient’s preferred name. Learn one meaningful detail about them beyond their diagnosis.

Support each other.

Empathy extends to colleagues. Offering encouragement, sharing stories during huddles, and participating in purposeful rounding foster a compassionate workplace culture.

Without empathy, care can feel transactional, leaving patients confused or disconnected. With empathy, clinical excellence becomes personal. It transforms procedures into experiences of dignity and respect.

Our commitment to Healing Northwest Indiana is reflected not only in clinical excellence, but in the relationships we build with patients and among ourselves. Methodist nurses bring extraordinary skill, judgment and compassion to their work. Empathy is simply one expression of that professionalism — visible in the way you listen, advocate and support patients through vulnerable moments. It is something to take pride in and an essential element of the care we deliver to our patients.

CLINICAL LADDER IN ACTION: Spotlight on 2025 Exemplar Submissions

At Methodist Hospitals, the Clinical Ladder program is more than a professional development pathway. It's a reflection of who we are as nurses. It highlights leadership at the bedside, engagement in the community, commitment to evidence-based practice and dedication to advancing our profession.

In this new Lamplighter feature series, we will spotlight select Clinical Ladder exemplars submitted in 2025. These narratives demonstrate how Methodist nurses extend their impact beyond daily patient care to promote health, education, safety and connection throughout Northwest Indiana.

This month, we feature Alyssa Sharp, RN, of Southlake Endoscopy. Her exemplar captures the spirit of community-based nursing and health promotion:

Alyssa's work is a powerful example of how Clinical Ladder participation recognizes professional growth, initiative, and leadership in action. Whether you are mentoring colleagues, leading quality improvements, participating in community outreach, or advancing your education, your contributions matter.

*The Methodist Hospitals Clinical Ladder program offers monetary awards ranging from **\$1,500 to \$3,500**, along with the professional distinction of demonstrating excellence in nursing practice.*

If you're ready to advance your career and make an impact, contact Mary Jo Valentine for more information at mvalentine@methodisthospitals.org. Don't miss this chance to grow professionally and contribute to our mission of excellence.

Nursing in the Community Event

By Alyssa Sharp, RN | Southlake Endoscopy

On August 23, 2025, I had the opportunity to participate in Highland's Town Wide Community Garage Sale through my church. I was provided a space to set up a table where I offered blood pressure screenings and educated community members about the importance of routine colonoscopy screenings. One meaningful moment from this event was when an individual recognized me and told me I was their nurse for a recent procedure they had. This person expressed gratitude for the care that I provided to them, which reminded me of the impact nurses can have on someone beyond the clinical setting. This experience allowed me to practice community-based nursing while addressing health promotion and disease prevention.

Throughout the event, I observed differences in who was willing to have their blood pressure taken. Most individuals who participated were older adults, while only a handful of young adults were interested in knowing their blood pressures. Several participants shared that they were already monitoring their blood pressures at home and taking blood pressure medications. Most people were open about sharing their health history with me, which demonstrated trust and engagement in the event. Interestingly, some middle-aged adults stated they preferred not to know their blood pressure, which reflects a common barrier to preventative care. This tends to be very common in the United States due to the cost of medical insurance and health care.

Since the event was held outdoors in the heat, I considered how environmental factors may have temporarily elevated some individuals' blood pressure readings. If the person did have a high blood pressure that was concerning, I encouraged them to follow up with their primary care physician for further evaluation. I anticipated more interest in colonoscopy screening education. However, many participants already had a gastroenterologist or were not yet screening age. I was able to provide a few referrals to Centers for Digestive Health, which reinforced the value of the event in connecting community members to appropriate healthcare resources that are available within the community.

January 2026 DAISY Award Recipient Tammy Symmes, RN



Congratulations to Tammy Symmes, RN, from the 5W1 Unit at our Southlake Campus, for being named a recent DAISY Award recipient! Tammy was nominated by a grateful patient who was recovering from colon surgery and awaiting biopsy results. From the moment Tammy entered the room, her “vivacious spirit and caring nature” brought a sense of calm and relief during a time of anxiety and uncertainty.

Despite a busy unit and an influx of new patients, Tammy consistently checked in, ensuring her patient’s needs were met with enthusiasm and empathy. By sharing her own health journey, she offered encouragement and became both an inspiration and a “Guardian Angel” during the hospital stay. Tammy’s ability to transform nursing into a “fine art” truly exemplifies the compassionate, patient-centered care we strive to provide every day.

Thank you, Tammy, for making such a meaningful difference in the lives of your patients and for representing Methodist Hospitals with excellence!

Join the Shared Governance Effort

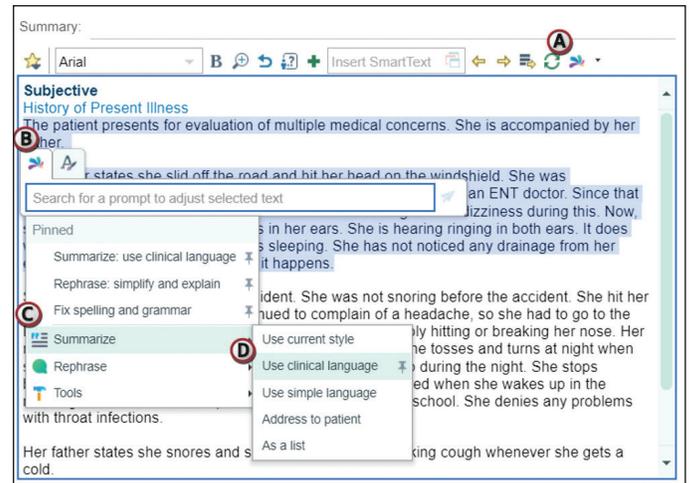
Shared Governance continues to be an important forum for nurses to collaborate, share ideas and strengthen professional practice across Methodist Hospitals. We are actively recruiting nurses who are interested in participating in council work and helping shape practice standards, workflows, and patient care initiatives.

If you are passionate about advancing nursing practice, improving patient outcomes, or bringing forward ideas and concerns from your unit, Shared Governance offers a meaningful way to have your voice heard. Nurses who would like to get involved, or who have questions about how to submit concerns or suggestions to Shared Governance, are encouraged to reach out to Mary Jo Valentine at mvalentine@methodisthospitals.org for more information. Your engagement makes a difference.

IT UPDATE:

Use AI Text Assistance to Edit Notes

To quickly enhance notes, you can use generative AI to edit all or part of your text. You can summarize text, change the tone for a different audience, or update the formatting. You can also check your spelling and grammar.



Try it Out

1. Open a note, textbox with access to the AI Text Assistant. You can tell whether AI is enabled in a textbox by looking for the AI button in the toolbar (A).
2. Select the text you want to modify.
3. Click  or right-click the selected text to open the menu of prompts you can use. You can also press Ctrl + F6.
4. Select a prompt. You can search for a prompt using the search field (B) if you know the name. Otherwise, select a category (C) and a prompt for that category (D). In a few moments, a modified version of your text appears.
5. Read the new text.
 - If the text is accurate and fits your needs, click **Looks Good** (E) to accept the generated text.
 - Click **Adjust** to further modify generated text with another prompt. You will need to verify the text again after the text is regenerated.
 - Click **Revert** to return the text to its original state.
 - Verify all information is present and correct before you accept the text.