We are excited to report that our union is growing! Nurses from the care management department have been working very hard trying to get recognition to join all of us in the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) bargaining unit at Mid-Columbia Medical Center (MCMC). This struggle actually goes back several years.

During our last round of negotiations nurses from across the hospital all agreed it was the fair and correct thing to do to include these care management nurses in our union.

Having fellow nurses at our hospital that get left out of the protections and benefits is not only unfair to them, it affects all nurses. An injury to one is an injury to all. Being in a workplace where a nurse can be singled out to be left significantly behind in wages, benefits and protections means we cannot successfully recruit and retain nurses for those positions.

The care management department’s nurses directly collaborate with all the nurses in our bargaining unit over the care that we give to our patients. If part of our team is left behind, it affects the whole team.

With this being such a high priority, we put forward a bargaining proposal last year to include these nurses.

Management adamantly refused to even discuss the proposal. They said they had no interest in this and when we tried to speak about the fairness and impact on our whole hospital to compromise recruitment and retention of good nurses in these positions, management did not care.

When we pointed out the huge value these nurses bring with decades of experience and knowledge to add to the collaboration in providing patient care, again they did not care. While we made historic wins in those negotiation on so many other issues, we were unsuccessful in winning on this issue at that moment.

However, we did not let that deter us! This past summer, the care management department nurses signed union recognition cards and we submitted the cards directly to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) demanding an election be held to include these nurses.

The NLRB assessed the cards and list of eligible voter list of nurses in the department and scheduled the election. On the day of the election our nurses voted in favor of joining ONA. However, our Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialist’s (CDIS) vote was challenged and management refused to include them.

The case management department has several discharge planners and currently one CDIS nurse, though there have been more than one CDIS in the past.
Care Management Nurses Fighting to Join ONA  continued from page 1

The CDIS RN serves as an essential resource to the clinical team ensuring that all relevant conditions requiring healthcare resources throughout the patient hospitalization are accurately captured in complete and specific documentation. Complete and specific documentation also promotes better patient care and disease management, while appropriately reflecting the acuity, severity and overall outcome of the patient. Although you may not work directly with CDIS they are working behind the scenes optimizing documentation integrity, better patient outcome, and higher revenue/reimbursement. As a highly skilled nurse who is both supporting better patient care and helping bring in better revenue for our hospital, it’s time the CDIS is properly compensated and respected in the ONA contract for the value they bring our community.

We moved forward with negotiations and met with management on Nov. 12 and successfully discussed several key issues including getting discharge planners put on the same pay scale as our bargaining unit, which will result in major raises for these nurses this year and in future years as they climb the step scale. At the negotiation, we proposed that CDIS be included as well, and management again refused, claiming that they did not want this one nurse included in our bargaining unit. We explained that our CDIS helps safe the hospital incredibly large sums of money in billing errors and protecting us from liabilities and lawsuits, while they were being paid far below all our other nurses across the hospital and having decades of nursing experience. However, far more important than their financial contribution, we talked about how our CDIS collaborates directly around patient care to make sure we don’t make mistakes and our patients receive the very best care possible. To leave this nurse out of bargaining unit and pay them substantially less than all the other nurses is ethically unacceptable. We are meeting with management to negotiate again on Dec. 20 and will report back if we are still being blocked to include CDIS, and if further actions will be required to show management how important this is to us all.

Taking Action!
In support of our CDIS not being left behind in pay, benefits, and protections, please sign our online petition in support of including the CDIS in our ONA bargaining unit. We need your signatures by this Thursday, Dec. 19 before we head back into negotiations on Friday. If management continues to refuse to do the right thing, please watch for further actions until we fix this!

PETITION SITE: surveymonkey.com/r/MCMC-PETITION

Letter from our ONA Grievance Chair

I would like to introduce myself as Grievance Chair for MCMC. I have worked at MCMC for the last 25 years, working 13 years in the ER and the last 12 years at Celilo in Medical Oncology. Since my kids have grown and left home, I was interested in and participated in the last contract negotiation. That was as interesting and important as I had hoped it would be, and felt it was a great step for nurses after the take away from the previous contract. Our labor representative, Amber Cooper, led the team and motivated us to get more nurses involved, and I wanted to stay involved with issues that affect nursing.

This is my first year as Grievance chair, and I wanted to let you know some of the issues that ONA has represented MCMC nurses in. In the first grievance this year, a nurse was given a written warning in reference to their behavior to their manager. This nurse was not talked to or given coaching or a verbal warning, but it went directly to a written warning. After discussions with HR, her manager and the ONA, we got management to back up and conduct a proper investigation and provide proper coaching before moving forward.

The second grievance dealt with our HCD language and the interpretation by management as well as the loss of pay a nurse received in being HCD’d out of rotation. There was also the issue of the right to discuss union business in the workplace, as the nurse asked co-workers about the HCD and the contract language around it. We were able to emphasize and stand up for our right to discuss the contract in our workplace. We won the lost pay for the nurse who was HCD’d out of rotation, which was a

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Know Your Weingarten Rights!

What are Your Weingarten Rights?
In the case *National Labor Relations Board vs. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, the Supreme Court ruled an employee who reasonably believes an investigatory interview will result in discipline has the right to have a union representative present. This is legally protected activity under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and is your fundamental right as part of an ONA bargaining unit. All nurses in ONA bargaining units have the right to ONA representation during any investigatory interview that could lead to discipline. By invoking your Weingarten Rights, you ensure you have an advocate by your side during difficult conversations. Having an ONA steward or labor representative supporting you gives you a contract expert to advise you during any conversations with management that may lead to discipline. While we hope you never need to exercise these rights, it’s important that we all know our rights in order to protect ourselves and our coworkers.

You Have a Right to Representation
Every nurse has discussions with supervisors about job performance. When this happens to you, there is an important question to ask your boss, “Could this meeting lead to discipline or affect my personal working conditions?” If the answer is “Yes,” stop the meeting and invoke your Weingarten Rights by saying: “If this discussion could in any way lead to my discipline or termination, or affect my personal working conditions, I request an association representative, steward or officer be present. Unless I have this representation I respectfully choose not to participate in this discussion.”

How to Use Your Weingarten Rights
Take immediate action when you are called into a meeting or discussion you believe may lead to discipline.

- Ask the supervisor or manager who is present, “Could this meeting lead to discipline or affect my personal working conditions?”
- If the answer is “Yes,” stop the meeting immediately.
- Invoke your Weingarten Rights by saying: “If this discussion could in any way lead to my discipline or termination, or affect my personal working conditions, I request an association representative, steward or officer be present. Unless I have this representation I respectfully choose not to participate in this discussion.”

Need help remembering your Weingarten Rights?
Request an ONA badge backer from your labor representative, Amber Cooper cooper@oregonrn.org. ONA badge backers identify you as a registered nurse, fit most lanyards and contain the full Weingarten statement on the reverse side.
big win to hold management accountable to follow the HCD rotation they had agreed to in our contract.

My hope in helping represent the ONA in these meetings is that the nurse has representation, so that they are not singled out unfairly in discipline, but that the contract is followed and that the consequences to a nurse are the same for any nurse in that situation. A fellow nurse might not know their rights in the contract, and they might ask you for help. Please contact me, and I am glad to follow up with Amber Cooper to be sure that every nurse’s rights are maintained.

Please remember that when a co-worker is going through any situation in which they are singled out, such as discipline or an ORS investigation, they need your support and encouragement. It is easy to feel alone and hurt, which can lead to nurses feeling discouraged and wanting to quit. Please be that co-worker who lets them know they are not alone.

My e-mail to contact me is daconklin35@gmail.com.

Grievance Chair is Deb Conklin (Oncology)

SAVE THE DATE!

ONA Convention and House of Delegates

May 18-19, 2020

Portland, OR

The convention's theme is "Rising Up Together" and will feature sessions on professional development, nursing practice and workplace issues, as well as topics critical to ONA’s strategic plan including equity and inclusion.

Registration is open at oregonrn.org/events