HCPro’s Handbook for the Nursing Staff
on the
ANCC Magnet Recognition Program®
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About the reviewer

Katherine Riley, MSN, BSN, RN, CNA, BC

Katherine Riley, MSN, BSN, RN, CNA, BC is the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program® (MRP) coordinator and assistant vice president of operations at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) in Bennington. Riley helped develop SVMC’s clinical advancement programs for nursing and imaging services, led the implementation of a shared governance model of professional practice across all clinical disciplines, and initiated a staff-supported salary model for women’s and children’s services—all of which were key ingredients in the hospital’s designation. In 2001, Riley led SVMC’s MRP application process, and she continues to oversee the development of the hospital’s MRP culture.
Introduction

What is the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program®?

During the nursing shortage of the 1980s, the American Academy of Nursing conducted a national research study to identify hospitals that had high retention rates and were able to recruit nurses despite the nursing shortage (McClure, Poulin, Sovie, and Wandelt, 2002). The study also attempted to identify organizational and nursing administration attributes that could be responsible for such success. As a result of this study, 41 “Magnet™” hospitals were selected based on their ability to attract and retain registered nursing staff (McClure and Hinshaw, 2002).

These 41 hospitals shared the following organizational traits:

- The chief nurse executive (CNE) was a formal member of the highest decision-making body in the organization
- Nursing was organized as a relatively flat structure, with minimal layers of hierarchy
- Decision-making related to staffing and patient care was decentralized to include staff nurses at the unit level
- Administration supported the nurses’ decisions regarding patient care
- Good communication existed between nurses and physicians (Havens and Aiken, 1999)

In the early 1990s, nursing emphasized best practices, benchmarking, and quality outcomes data, as well as renewed interest in the “Magnet™” status concept. A need emerged for a process by which healthcare organizations could apply for national recognition of excellence in nursing care.
The ANCC

In 1991, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), was established to provide a process for both individuals and organizations to seek accreditation, certification, and the recognition the profession needed (Urden and Monarch, 2002). Thus, the ANCC established a program known as the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program® (MRP), to which hospitals could apply to be recognized as centers of nursing excellence.

Achieving designation entails an initial application fee; submission of written documents exemplifying how the 14 Forces of Magnetism—elements that contribute to an organizational culture of excellence—are incorporated into nursing services; participation in databases that benchmark nursing quality indicators at the broadest possible level; and a multiday site visit.

Growing interest in Magnet Recognition Program® designation

The growing interest in achieving designation and the escalating application rates can be attributed to a number of factors:

1. Numerous published research studies have demonstrated better patient outcomes in hospitals with higher (i.e., better) nurse to patient ratios, higher percentages of certified nurses, and higher percentages of BSN-prepared nurses, all of which are characteristics of MRP status organizations
2. Designation has been identified in the federal Nurse Reinvestment Act and the Institute of Medicine Report as an initiative for reducing registered nurse turnover and improving quality of care
3. The Joint Commission has identified designation as a positive force in improving practice environments, quality of care, and patient safety
4. Faculty in colleges and schools of nursing encourage graduates to ask questions regarding the practice environment of a potential employer and to seek employment at designated hospitals.

5. In 2004, for the first time, MRP status was added as a factor in how *U.S. News and World Report* ranks hospitals (in its annual list of top 100 hospitals).

Perhaps most importantly, however, nurses want to be recognized for their excellent work, and designation provides that recognition. According to staff nurses, obtaining designation ensures that the voice of the nurse will be heard and appreciated.

Once an organization has achieved designation, it must apply for redesignation every four years. The original Magnet Recognition Program® has expanded to include long-term care, ambulatory surgery centers, rehabilitation services, home healthcare, and international healthcare organizations. The ANCC's home page, [www.nursecredentialing.org](http://www.nursecredentialing.org), includes the latest information and updates on the Magnet Recognition Program®.

In 1994, the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle became the first hospital to be awarded ANCC Magnet Recognition®. By 1998, 13 hospitals had been awarded designation; only three were among the 41 identified in the 1980s (Havens and Aiken, 1999). When this publication went to press, there were more than 250 designated healthcare organizations listed on the ANCC's Web site.

**Research related to designation**

The original 41 hospitals were identified as MRP status facilities because of their ability to attract and retain registered nurses (RN). Descriptive research conducted in these hospitals produced a body of knowledge that defined the practice environments within them. These findings were presented in terms of attributes of the nursing leader, professional attributes of staff nurses, and the professional practice environment (Scott, Sochalski, and Aiken, 1999).
Subsequent research studies validated and expanded these findings, which are summarized as follows (McClure and Hinshaw, 2002):

**Nursing leaders**
- are visionary and enthusiastic
- are supportive and knowledgeable
- maintain high practice standards
- value education and professional development
- hold positions of power and status within the organization
- are visible to staff nurses
- are actively involved in professional organizations
- respond to nurses’ needs
- conduct open communication with staff nurses

**Staff nurses**
- have autonomy and are accountable for their practices
- can establish and maintain positive nurse-patient relationships
- create collaborative nurse-physician relationships and communicate openly
- participate in unit-based decision-making
- engage in patient teaching
- value the professional image of nursing

In a professional practice environment,
- the organization provides adequate staffing (from the perspective of the staff nurse)
- the nurse manager is supportive
- organizational support exists for education, professional growth, and career advancement
- nurses can participate in organizational decision-making
- nurses have competitive salaries and benefits
- the nursing organization is decentralized

Due to their organizational support of nursing practices and their ability to attract and retain RNs, Magnet Recognition Program® hospitals have higher (i.e., better) nurse-to-patient ratios.
The benefits of designation

How ANCC Magnet Recognition® affects you and your patients

ANCC Magnet Recognition® is the highest level of recognition that an organization can achieve for excellence in nursing and is considered the “gold standard” in the nursing world. Because designation is awarded for excellence in nursing services, its benefits extend to patients through improved quality of care. These benefits directly relate to the cultural transformation associated with obtaining and maintaining the designation and have been identified by research conducted in designated hospitals:

**Benefits to nurses**
- Autonomy in clinical practice decision-making
- Participation in nursing leadership and organizational decision-making
- Adequate nurse staffing
- Higher RN job satisfaction
- Enhanced nurse-physician collaboration
- Integration of professional models of care
- Decreased needle-stick injuries

**Benefits to patients**
- Decreased length of stay
- Increased patient/family satisfaction
- Decreased risk of falls, medication errors, and postprocedure complications
- Reduced family complaints
- High quality of nursing care
- Confidence in the hospital because it has obtained the highest honor awarded for nursing care
Why your organization needs your support

The process for achieving designation is lengthy and comprehensive. It often requires changes in organizational structure and work culture, necessitates quarterly and annual updates to ANCC and redesignation every four years, and lastly, demands strong ongoing commitment to its principles and standards.

The support of nursing staff from the beginning of the journey through achievement of designation is essential to success. Organizations often use inservices, articles, continuing education programs, presentations, posters, and staff meetings to inform and raise the awareness of the general nursing staff and the leadership. The rest of the organization must support designation as well. The criticality of excellence in support staff and systems cannot be underestimated, as nursing is not an entity unto itself—it is an integral part of the system of healthcare delivery.

Is it worth it?

As you become more informed about the program, you may ask yourself, “Is designation worth this effort?” You are not alone. Current designees have asked the same question, and they now say “yes,” citing several reasons:

- The practice environment becomes more supportive of nursing and professionalism
- Staff education is emphasized more
- MRP status encourages lower turnover, higher retention, improved recruitment
- MRP status leads to better nurse-patient and nurse-physician relations