

### Background

McKean County is rural area with limited access to healthcare. There are currently two hospitals located in McKean County which serve over 40,000 constituents, not to mention those seeking healthcare at our facilities who travel from outside the county. Out of the 40,000 people in our county, 20.1%<sup>1</sup> of those are elderly, high risk patients. Due to our rural region, we do not have many specialty units to offer patients, more specifically ICU's. UPMC Kane does not offer ICU care and Bradford Regional Medical Center's ICU is pending closure in May of 2021. This poses an issue for the emergency department RN's, as most are not trained to provide the same level of ongoing ICU care in the emergency department as one would receive in a stand-alone ICU. This is due to the lack of education and training. Since ICU's in these rural hospitals are not available, having highly educated and skilled nurses care for them in the emergency departments while awaiting transfer is an expected alternative for safe patient care. Educational opportunities will allow for better patient outcomes.

### Political Issue

Due to the lack of ICU's in the rural hospitals within McKean County, the process of transferring can create time delays, which is not ideal for an unstable patient needing intensive care. Although stabilizing patients in the ED prior to transfer is the standard practice, weather conditions and bed availability in receiving facilities can delay the transfer for extended periods of time. Typically, ED nurses do not possess the same level of training as ICU nurses. The goal is for the best patient outcomes in our rural facilities. The World Health Organization states "Investments in reducing patient harm can lead to significant financial savings, and more importantly better patient outcomes"<sup>2</sup>.

### My Proposal to Improve the Situation

I am proposing state funding for Emergency Department Nurses in McKean County, UPMC Kane and BRMC, to be trained in ACLS, PALS, Trauma Nurse Core Certification, Geriatric Emergency Nursing Education, and ventilation management, in order better care for and monitor the critically ill patients in the ED in need of stabilization and monitoring prior to transfer to a receiving ICU.

ACLS courses have a positive impact upon return of spontaneous circulation and survival for patients<sup>4</sup>. Pediatric advanced life support (PALS), is crucial to improving pediatric outcomes due to the fact that pediatric emergencies are infrequent and have a different clinical presentation than adults<sup>4</sup>. Trauma Nurse Core Certification provides nurses with the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and hands on training needed to provide high-quality, trauma nursing care. This certification will allow emergency department nurses to properly assess and implement interventions to improve patient outcomes<sup>5</sup>. Geriatric Emergency Nursing Education (GENE), is a course meant to improve geriatric outcomes<sup>5</sup>. This is especially important for our area due to the fact we have a substantial elderly population. Emergency department staff is responsible for stabilizing and managing ventilated patients until they are transferred. A ventilation management course will give the nurses enhanced education on how to manage the care of a client on a ventilator..

All of these educational opportunities will make our rural nurses more competent in caring for critically ill patients awaiting transfer to an ICU. Increased competence should increase confidence in the care of the critically ill patient requiring monitoring in an ICU. The goal is to improve patient outcomes..

### Impact on Students and Professional Nurses

Education is "necessary to the creation of a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the nation's health"<sup>7</sup> Studies have found relationships between higher rates of nursing specialty certification and lower rates of failure to rescue, infection, and patient death<sup>8</sup>. These educational opportunities will make our nurses excel in the care they provide, and bring them confidence while doing so. Education will allow nurses to progress their career seamlessly, while improving patient outcomes along the way.

### Supporting Organizations

The Emergency Nurse Associations' mission statement is "to advance excellence in emergency nursing". The ENA values lifelong learning and believes emergency care evolves through education. GENE & TNCC are both courses created by the ENA which are part of this educational proposal.

### Impact on People in Rural NW Pennsylvania

As previously identified, McKean County no longer has ICU's to care for or stabilize critical patients awaiting transfer. With being in a rural area with harsh weather conditions, these patients can be held in the ED's for long periods of time. A study by critical care medicine showed that critically ill emergency department patients with a >6 hour delay in transfer to an ICU had increased hospital length of stay, and higher hospital mortality<sup>3</sup>. These factors contribute to a decline in patient outcomes. Having emergency room nurses, and providers, who are more highly educated and skilled in the care of critically ill patients, may promote better patient outcomes while awaiting transfer to ICU's no longer present in our rural communities in McKean County.

### Legislator



Pennsylvania State Representative Martin Causer, is serving McKean County. Representative Causer is a Pitt-Bradford alum. He has been in office since 2003. Before assuming office in 2003, Representative Causer was an EMT and a 911 operator. He takes a high liking and interest to healthcare issues. He is committed to ensuring the voice of rural Pennsylvania is heard in Harrisburg. *Response:* Representative Causer stated support for nurses education, "education is necessary for our rural healthcare workers for the sake of our patients". He also discussed the need for more Pre-hospital Registered Nurse (PHRN), as the need for inter-facility transfers will be increasing with the closure of BRMC's service units. Representative Causer also spoke about current legislation that he has supported to increase EMS services across the county and state. He said that funding educational opportunities is will help to ensure the nurses are more likely to take the classes. Overall, Representative Causer found this presented issue of importance and was supportive of the need for funding of educational opportunities for our rural nurses.

### References

- <sup>1</sup>U.S. census bureau quickfacts: McKean County, Pennsylvania. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2021
- <sup>2</sup>Patient safety. (n.d.). Retrieved March 04, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/patient-safety>
- <sup>3</sup>Chafin, Donald B. MD, MS, FCCM; Trzeciak, Stephen MD, MPH; Likourezos, Antonios MA, MPH; Baumann, Brigitte M. MD, MSCE; Dellinger, R Phillip MD, FCCM for the DELAY-ED study group Impact of delayed transfer of critically ill patients from the emergency department to the intensive care unit\*, Critical Care Medicine: June 2007 - Volume 35 - Issue 6 - p 1477-1483
- <sup>4</sup>Lockey A, Lin Y, Cheng A. Impact of adult advanced cardiac life support course participation on patient outcomes-A systematic review and meta-analysis. Resuscitation. 2018 Aug;129:48-54. doi: 10.1016/j.resuscitation.2018.05.034. Epub 2018 Jun 11. PMID: 29902494.
- <sup>5</sup>About emergency Nurses Association. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <https://www.ena.org/about#mission>
- <sup>6</sup>Online courses disc profiles & trainer kits. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <https://www.corexcel.com/>
- <sup>7</sup>NLN Vision Series. (2012, November). *NLN Vision: Transforming Research in Nursing Education. NLN Board of Governors*. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from [http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/about/nln-vision-series-%28position-statements%29/nlnvision\\_5.pdf?sfvrsn=](http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/about/nln-vision-series-%28position-statements%29/nlnvision_5.pdf?sfvrsn=)
- <sup>8</sup>Boyle, Diane. Nursing Specialty Certification and Patient Outcomes: What We Know in Acute Care Hospitals and Future Directions, Journal of the Association for Vascular Access, Volume 22, Issue 3, 2017.