

# Built to Last: *A Culture of Courage, Excellence, and Resilience*

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**A**s nurse leaders, we lead with values that emerge from our clinical foundations, patient advocacy, ethics, sense of justice and moral centeredness. Creating environments that enable these to flourish within a context of business, finances, strategies, and standardization is the challenge for nurse and healthcare leaders of today. The pressures on the modern-

day nursing system, profession, and organization have never been greater nor the need to keep humanity at the center of all we do. We are sharing our work to create an environment that focuses on excellence, through individual courage and professional bravery, with the goal of increasing understanding, informing opinions, and helping other organizations.

## CULTURE

Culture is a collection of the norms, values, and beliefs of the people who make up an organization. It is not in the walls of facilities, it is not in an organization, it exists and lives in people. It has been said that true culture is what we do when no one is watching. But what about when you are put on a world stage and everything that you do is challenged? This is when the strength of an organization's culture is tested. The nursing staff of Texas Health Dallas (THD), and indeed all of the hospital's stakeholders, experienced such a challenge in October 2014 when the first patient diagnosed with Ebola virus disease in the United States came under our care. We learned more about ourselves, our community, our profession, and humanity than we ever imagined possible.

The organizational culture of Texas Health Dallas and the entire Texas Health Resources system is embodied in The THR Promise: Individuals Caring for Individuals, Together. Several years ago, the organization identified and promulgated a body of behaviors that uphold our core values of respect, integrity, compassion, and excellence. The behaviors serve as a daily guide for interactions with patients, visitors, and coworkers.

The events of October 2014 tested the strength of our culture, our values, and The THR Promise to one another, to patients, and to the communities we serve.

This article explains how the leadership and clinical nursing staff of Texas Health Dallas built a framework we call "4C=P", aligned with The THR Promise, that enabled us to truly care for our patients and one another with respect, integrity, compassion, and excellence.

## 4C=P (A TRANSFORMATIONAL FRAMEWORK)

For the brave, strong, and courageous men and women who practice the noblest of professions, nursing, at Texas Health Dallas, the 4C=P framework reflects our values.

Part of this story began almost 5 years ago, when I [Cole Edmonson] arrived as the new chief nursing officer (CNO). I was amazed to find such an incredibly talented, tenured, diverse, and loyal group of professional nurses who had navigated major changes in healthcare, their organization, and their profession. They were no strangers to the cost pressures, drive for standardization, emphasis on quality outcome, and other pressures experienced by everyone in healthcare today. Through all the challenges, they continued to focus on patients and their peers, with a will, not to just survive these challenges, but also to flourish and preserve the strong culture.

An interprofessional framework was crucial to create synergy among the board, medical staff, leadership, ancillary teams, and the community of nursing to set a path forward while respecting, valuing, and learning from our past and celebrating our current state. Every nurse at Texas Health Dallas wanted a shared vision of excellence in nursing with a culture of positive regard that embraced the true meaning of being a Magnet® organization. We realized it was critical and would require intentional design, using complexity science as a framework for the model, recognizing the dynamic nature of the relationships and convergent influences.

Together we began to shape our vision. The 4C=P framework consisted of the 4C domains—courage, competency, compassion, and caring—designed to create and support a professional (P) nursing staff. Courage is the ability to find inner strength to do the right thing for ourselves and others. Competency is the application of knowledge, information, and wisdom to the work and practice setting of patient care that reflect the dynamic nature and complexity of the environment.<sup>1</sup> Compassion is "the humane quality of understanding suffering in others and wanting to do something about it."<sup>2</sup> Caring is the empathy that allows nursing to keep a focus on humanity that must be attended to in order to grow, advance, and optimize outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Key elements that helped in building, developing, and anchoring the framework are shared in this article. Although not a comprehensive list, each highlights a crucial belief, philosophy, or foundation.

## COURAGE

Courage is an essential component for a healthy work environment focused on safety of patients and caregivers. Courage is the foundation of acts that align with values and morals in favor of doing the right thing. Courage is necessary in creating environments where nurses most often act as the true north on the moral compass in healthcare and where morally courageous acts are encouraged and expected to improve the safety of patients, families, and caregivers.

## Leader to Patient Program

The Leader to Patient Program (L2P) was designed to translate the work of Dr. Barbara Mackoff on nurse manager engagement theory into practice within a framework of complexity science using the model of balanced experiential inquiry for evaluation.<sup>4</sup> L2P was created in part to provide line-of-site for nurse leaders into their clinical foundations<sup>5</sup> routinely through Sacred Sixty, a protected time for managers to round on patients, visitors, staff, and physicians every day from 9 to 11 a.m. This time is sacred and not interruptible by meetings, e-mail, or phone calls unless emergent or urgent in nature.

L2P is supported by a curriculum based on emotional mastery elements defined in Mackoff's 2010 work.<sup>5</sup> These concepts are foundational to the interprofessional leadership development program that occurs monthly for leaders in the facility. L2P has created the connection of clinical leaders to the work and practice occurring on their units through direct visibility, involvement, and leader presence.

## Reflection as a Practice

Reflection is the practitioner's ability to be aware of, make sense of, and learn from daily practice.<sup>6</sup> We created the reflection program for nurse leaders because we are an organization that emphasizes personal health and wellness through creating strong and resilient leaders that are refreshed and energized.

Reflection is encouraged on 2 levels, as the process is occurring and post-event, both being crucial to fully

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