
Crystal Ratkovsky Wins IAPS 2024 Sepsis Award for Leading Sepsis Initiatives at UPMC Hamot



Crystal Ratkovsky, CCRN, is a dedicated nurse at UPMC Hamot with over 15 years of experience who has a focused passion around sepsis. She led the initiative to introduce a sepsis alert for patients meeting the criteria of sepsis/systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) and developed a sepsis screening tool and checklist. Recognizing the need for staff on all units to be well versed on the topic of sepsis, early recognition, and proper and timely treatment, she also developed a sepsis committee to focus on active staff participation in providing sepsis education to clinical and medical staff.

Through this committee, Ratkovsky was able to engage nurses and physicians to commit to being a sepsis coach and champion in any sepsis alert and drive sepsis awareness. She collaborated with other disciplines for their buy-in and engagement around this initiative. She went above and beyond to not only make this team, but also to help them be successful with the implementation of sepsis protocol for the sepsis alert. Following staff feedback on how they will be most responsive to answering to the sepsis conditions, the alert is text paged in addition to being announced on the overhead speaker, and a sepsis checklist bundle enables them to act appropriately and with confidence.

She continues to drive sepsis recognition and staff education by engaging the sepsis committee and unit-based clinicians. She put together an entire sepsis awareness campaign and started an annual sepsis walk. She held a one-hour sepsis lecture in which two sepsis survivors spoke about their experience, underscoring the importance of early recognition and timely sepsis treatment. Ratkovsky monitors all sepsis patients, and outcomes, and sepsis bundle treatment, and provides constructive feedback to staff on any outliers in treatment.

Her sepsis initiatives have had a significant impact on reducing further harm and improving patient care and outcomes, and it is sustainable, reliable, and scalable. The sepsis alert alone has helped staff become more knowledgeable in identifying the signs and symptoms of sepsis, and they have become more confident in collaborating with providers with their assessment. The team of sepsis coaches and champions she developed has educated their peers on sepsis recognition and improved the treatment of sepsis.

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