

CASE STUDY

for health care providers worldwide

How Parkview Created a Holistic Response Team to Improve Workforce Well-Being

Providing ongoing, proactive peer support

Published – April 2021 • 15-min read



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Overview

The challenge

Health care staff across all levels find it challenging to prioritize their own well-being, both during and outside of an immediate crisis. The stigma associated with accessing emotional support resources, a health care culture that idolizes stoicism, and competing priorities for time leave many prone to burnout.

The organization

Parkview Health is a not-for-profit, community-based health system serving northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio. The system includes an extensive network of primary care and specialty physicians and 10 hospitals, with more than 13,000 employees.

The approach

Parkview has a robust holistic nursing program that provides an opportunity for nurses to achieve certification. They created a workforce-facing Holistic Response Team (HRT) to “take care of the people who take care of our patients.” The HRT is made up of clinical staff who are dedicated to improving their peers’ well-being.

The result

The HRT creates space and time for staff to address their emotional needs. This fosters a culture that normalizes and encourages the prioritization of well-being as an ongoing goal—not exclusively during times of crisis. In addition, Parkview has seen a positive impact on the engagement and retention of their overall nursing staff. Clinical staff who serve with the HRT report a significant reconnection to purpose and mission.

Approach

How Parkview Health integrated holistic nursing into employee workflows to boost well-being

In 2017, Parkview Health created a Holistic Response Team to both proactively and reactively addresses challenges to staff well-being. The HRT helps staff create space and time during the workday to reflect and address their emotional needs.

The three components

Parkview attributes the success of the HRT to three key components:

01 Promote visibility into holistic nursing to secure workforce buy-in

02 Provide flexibility to motivate participation in the HRT

03 Embed holistic nursing into employee workflow

01 Promote visibility into holistic nursing to secure workforce buy-in

What is holistic nursing?

The [American Holistic Nurses Association](#) defines holistic nursing as “nursing that has healing the whole person as its goal.” First introduced by Florence Nightingale, holistic nursing addresses the patient’s entire being, considering their values, emotions, and beliefs. It also requires providers to practice self-awareness, self-care, and self-reflection.

Survey existing attitudes around holistic nursing

Before launching its Holistic Nursing Program in 2014, Parkview sent the entire nursing workforce a 10-question survey (included on pp. 13-16 of this report) to assess the organization’s sentiment around holistic healing practices. They focused the survey questions on several key topics:

- **Familiarity with holistic nursing practices:** The survey asked respondents whether they had personal experience with 14 distinct practices of holistic nursing, ranging from aromatherapy and therapeutic massage to mindfulness and motivational interviewing. This question served two purposes. First, it educated staff by showing that holistic nursing is a combination of many mainstream practices. Second, it showed staff that they were already engaging with many holistic nursing practices. This helped secure buy-in and diminish skepticism about the program.



1. PROMOTE VISIBILITY INTO HOLISTIC NURSING TO SECURE WORKFORCE BUY-IN

Survey existing attitudes around holistic nursing (cont.)

- **Receptiveness of different audiences to holistic nursing:** The survey asked nurses if they believed patients, the family and friends of patients, nurses, and doctors would be receptive to holistic nursing practices. These questions helped gauge how much effort would be needed to secure additional stakeholder buy-in.
- **Personal interest in holistic nursing:** The survey ended with several questions asking nurse respondents if they would like to learn more about holistic nursing. For example, would they be interested in attending classes on holistic nursing, helping the Holistic Nursing Committee at Parkview, or completing certification as a holistic nurse. Of the 487 respondents, nearly 44% were interested in certification and 134 nurses volunteered to help the committee. This indicated that there was strong interest in the program and helped the committee plan next steps in education and outreach.

Provide forums for education about the benefits of holistic nursing

Armed with information from the survey, Parkview’s holistic nursing leaders created opportunities to educate and inform the entire workforce on the benefits of holistic healing practices. These events solidified the “what’s in it for me?” for staff. Including nursing leaders in these meetings was critical to success, as they can cascade knowledge down to their teams.

Examples of workforce-wide education on holistic nursing practice

- Host monthly classes on holistic nursing basics
- Send monthly educational emails with holistic nursing practice tips, self-care tips, and latest holistic nursing research
- Provide resource binders about holistic nursing practice for use on units
- Educate librarians and clinical educators about holistic nursing practice
- Provide every department in the health system with a holistic nurse liaison

02 Provide flexibility to motivate participation in the HRT

By 2017, Parkview’s Holistic Nursing Committee pushed for the creation of a workforce-facing Holistic Response Team (HRT) to integrate holistic nursing treatments into workforce well-being. The sole FTE (full-time equivalent employee) of the Holistic Response Team, an HRT coordinator, oversees the HRT roster, currently consisting of 25 rounders. HRT rounding occurs Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. All members of the HRT commit to eight hours of monthly rounding. HRT rounders are paid for their services at the same rate as their base pay.¹ Generally, rounders participate not for any financial incentive but rather because they view service with the HRT as a rewarding and manageable monthly commitment.

The recruitment and training of HRT participants was based on the importance of providing rounders with flexibility and choice. Parkview’s Holistic Nursing Committee enabled this flexibility and choice through several tactics:

- **Conduct an annual holistic nursing survey:** The Holistic Nursing Committee continues to send out an annual survey to monitor the impact of holistic nursing on the nursing workforce. The annual survey asks about familiarity with holistic nursing and also includes several questions around what types of holistic nursing education employees would like to receive. For example, they asked respondents to choose between 1– to 2-hour workshops, 4- to 8-hour trainings, or 2-day instruction leading to certification.

94

Number of Parkview Health employees who have served with the Holistic Response Team since 2017.

1. HRT participation does not qualify for overtime pay. In order to serve on the HRT, an employee cannot be staffed at higher than 0.9 FTE status. Since many nurses are staffed as 0.9 FTE (based on the standard 3-day, 12-hour shift structure), 8 hours will take them 1 FTE. If a nurse is staffed below 0.9 FTE, they can take on as many HRT rounding hours as they would like, up to 1 FTE hour equivalency.



2. PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO MOTIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE HRT

- **Provide diverse training options:** About a quarter of Parkview’s HRT rounders are certified in holistic nursing. While formal certification through the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) is encouraged for HRT participants, it is not mandatory. This enables non-nurses, such as physical therapists or medical assistants, to serve on the HRT. Non-certified HRT rounders receive three hours of one-on-one training with the HRT coordinator. This is followed by preceptorship for four hours of rounding.

Three main topics are covered in HRT training:

1. **Crisis intervention:** What are the main crisis intervention techniques that an HRT rounder can employ, and how can HRT rounders make them most effective in various scenarios.
2. **Holistic practice areas:** What are the different practice areas and modalities that are incorporated into holistic nursing practice, and how can rounders learn about them and incorporate them into their rounding.
3. **The HRT rounder as a first responder:** How an HRT rounder is integrated into rapid response and Code Blue interventions.

Parkview’s Holistic Nursing Committee offers a wide array of courses focused on general holistic nursing practice, as well as on specific skills such as massage therapy or nutrition for healing. Some courses, primarily those aimed at formal AHNA certification, required participants to pay a fee, though this was subsidized partly by Parkview.

Additionally, HRT participants can count their rounding hours toward the hours needed for AHNA holistic nurse certification (48 practice hours are required for certification as a holistic nurse, and 100 hours every 5 years are needed to maintain one’s certification).



2. PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO MOTIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE HRT

- **Reliance on individual skills:** There are numerous practices that fall under holistic nursing. No single HRT participant is expected to be an expert in each practice area or to be trained in any of them. Interest in holistic nursing and a willingness to learn are the most important characteristics in selecting rounders. In this way, the HRT can recruit a highly varied group of rounders and enable each one to work comfortably in their areas of expertise.



When staffing up the HRT, there was a temptation to try and fill the rounder vacancies as quickly as possible. But I thought, ‘I’m not going to just fill the vacancies for the sake of filling the vacancies.’ There are a bunch of things that make an HRT intervention a success: the right smile, the right connection, the right energy, and all of that needs to be reflected when we bring someone onto the HRT. **The right HRT rounder isn’t just someone who’s going to round but is going to actively help develop the HRT program because they believe in the culture of holistic nursing.**

Carolyn Meyer, BSN, RN, HC-BC, CCL, HRT Coordinator
Parkview Health

03 Embed holistic nursing into employee workflow

Health care workers often don't access well-being resources because there's a stigma around behavioral health issues. A major reason for the HRT's success is that it is staffed by colleagues who present not as behavioral health specialists, but as direct peers. This feature sets the HRT apart from practices like psychological first aid or Behavioral Health Emergency Response Teams¹ by combining the skill set of holistic nursing with the style of a peer support network.

When rounding, HRT rounders are easily recognized by their lavender scrubs, inspired by the Code Lavender system.² This distinctive helps Parkview employees understand and appreciate the presence of HRT participants on their unit.

HRT interventions

There are a variety of ways in which the HRT directly supports employee well-being at Parkview:

- **Rounding:** The HRT routinely visits both clinical sites and administrative offices throughout the 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday work week. They typically bring along a Code Lavender-style cart containing snacks, water, peer-to-peer affirmation cards, and tools for aroma or massage therapy. Their rounding in administrative offices openly expands their services beyond frontline staff, especially to leaders at the organization.

1. For more information about Behavioral Health Emergency Response Teams, see pp. 46-50 of [Rebuild the Foundation for a Resilient Workforce](#).

2. Modeled after the Code Blue patient intervention, a Code Lavender is a crisis intervention for a health care worker in need of emotional/mental support in the immediate aftermath of a workplace trauma or incident, such as a code blue.



3. EMBED HOLISTIC NURSING INTO EMPLOYEE WORKFLOW

HRT interventions (cont.)

- **Crisis calls:** Parkview staff can reach the HRT’s full-time coordinator by a direct phone line that is available to all Parkview Health employees. Managers, nursing and non-nursing alike, are encouraged to use the crisis call line as a “just-in-time” resource for employees dealing with worrying levels of stress. There are two levels of crisis call to the HRT:
 - **Level 2:** Rounding on a coworker who is having a mildly stressful day or who is involved in a rapid response. Intervention at this stress level helps mitigate escalation to Level 3, much like how a medical rapid response helps prevent a code blue.
 - **Level 3:** Crisis event (i.e., coworker associated with code blue event or personal crisis that needs immediate intervention for the overall well-being of the coworker). The HRT responds within 45-60 minutes following a code blue to do a critical debrief and can then refer the impacted employee to the EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for further counseling if needed.
- **Holistic Huddles:** Parkview’s HRT publishes a monthly newsletter that presents a deep dive on a specific well-being best practice. Examples of past best practices include Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) tapping, self-compassion, and art therapy. Each Holistic Huddle explains the benefits of each best practice as well as what initial steps to take. The Holistic Huddles are often shared during nursing huddles and are posted in break rooms and workstations across the system.



During the early days of the pandemic, I was rounding in the medical ICU in my lavender scrubs and a nurse recognized that I was from the HRT. She ran up saying, **‘thank you so much, thank you for not abandoning us.’** This was at a time when everyone was terrified of being in contact with MICU staff and when the HRT showed up, it made a difference. That comment really moved me because it showed that our colleagues know that they can rely on us.”

Carolyn Meyer, BSN, RN, HC-BC, CCL, HRT Coordinator
Parkview Health



3. EMBED HOLISTIC NURSING INTO EMPLOYEE WORKFLOW

Types of HRT modalities and services offered to Parkview employees

Holistic nursing recognizes that no two individuals will have the exact same approach to handling stress. Thus, the HRT provides a variety of offerings when rounding or making crisis calls. The Holistic Response Team's healing modalities all revolve around creating space and time for staff to address their emotions and well-being needs. Among the HRT modalities available to Parkview Health employees are the following:

- Affirmation cards
- Healing touch therapy
- Crisis debriefing
- Calming presence techniques
- Meditation
- Sound therapy
- Nourishment
- Massage therapy
- Guided imagery
- Breathing exercises
- Motivational interviewing
- Aromatherapy
- Mindful movement
- Therapeutic communication

Results

The HRT helped Parkview develop a culture that regularly prioritizes emotional well-being and normalizes asking for help—not exclusively in times of crisis.

- **Strong feedback about HRT effectiveness:** When asked if they would call the HRT for a co-worker, 99% of Parkview staff said they would because they view the HRT as beneficial. Additionally, over 98% of Parkview staff who had an HRT intervention were pleased with the intervention.
- **Effectively ramped up support services during the Covid-19 pandemic:** Between January and October 2020, the HRT made 32,791 interventions across rounds and crisis calls, a 110% increase over the same period in 2019.
- **Reduced absenteeism:** Both survey data and anecdotal evidence suggest that interventions from the HRT directly helped employees who would otherwise have called off from their shift without the intervention.
- **Reconnection to purpose for HRT participants:** Several HRT rounders have praised the program for reconnecting them to their professional purpose. Some have said that participation on the HRT helped them to reconsider leaving the health care profession. ▼



This is such a needed service for staff. If we do not have an outlet for stressful situations, we cannot effectively take care of our patients. Happier staff means better patient care and less nurse burnout

Nurse apprentice, anonymous feedback survey
Parkview Health

Supporting artifact

Questions from Parkview Health's 2014 Holistic Nursing Practices Familiarity Survey

1. Please select the holistic nursing practices in which you have personal experience: (Select all that apply)
 - A. Aromatherapy
 - B. Biofeedback
 - C. Breathing techniques for anxiety and/or pain reduction
 - D. Creating a healing environment through your presence
 - E. Guided imagery
 - F. Healing or therapeutic touch
 - G. Mindfulness-based stress reduction
 - H. Motivational interviewing
 - I. Nutrition for healing
 - J. Reflexology/acupuncture
 - K. Stress management through self-care practices
 - L. Therapeutic heat and cold
 - M. Therapeutic massage
 - N. I have not used holistic nursing techniques before
 - O. Other (please specify)



SUPPORTING ARTIFACTS

Questions from Parkview Health's 2014 Holistic Nursing Practices Familiarity Survey (Continued)

2. Select the holistic nursing practices that you would be interested in learning more about: (Select all that apply)
 - A. Aromatherapy
 - B. Biofeedback
 - C. Breathing techniques for anxiety and/or pain reduction
 - D. Creating a healing environment through your presence
 - E. Guided imagery
 - F. Healing or therapeutic touch
 - G. Mindfulness-based stress reduction
 - H. Motivational interviewing
 - I. Nutrition for healing
 - J. Reflexology/acupuncture
 - K. Stress management through self-care practices
 - L. Therapeutic heat and cold
 - M. Therapeutic massage
 - N. I have not used holistic nursing techniques before
 - O. Other (please specify)

3. How receptive do you think your patients would be to holistic nursing practices, such as those listed in question 2?
 - A. Not receptive
 - B. Somewhat receptive
 - C. Very receptive
 - D. Not sure

4. How receptive do you think your patient's family and/or friends would be to holistic nursing practices?
 - A. Not receptive
 - B. Somewhat receptive
 - C. Very receptive
 - D. Not sure



SUPPORTING ARTIFACTS

Questions from Parkview Health's 2014 Holistic Nursing Practices Familiarity Survey (Continued)

5. How receptive do you think your coworkers (nurses) would be to holistic nursing practices?
 - A. Not receptive
 - B. Somewhat receptive
 - C. Very receptive
 - D. Not sure

6. How receptive do you think doctors would be to holistic nursing practices?
 - A. Not receptive
 - B. Somewhat receptive
 - C. Very receptive
 - D. Not sure

7. Do you think that Parkview could be set apart from other hospital systems in Indiana through the use of holistic nursing practices?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

8. What information would you want us to know that we have not asked about?
(Type in your reply)

9. Which of the following would you be interested in related to holistic nursing practices if they were offered at Parkview? (Select all that apply)
 - A. Classes about holistic nursing practices
 - B. Helping the Holistic Nursing Committee
 - C. Certification as a holistic nurse

10. If you are interested in assisting with the Holistic Nursing Committee, please enter your name and email below. (Type in reply)








SUPPORTING ARTIFACTS

Examples of Holistic Nursing educational offerings at Parkview, 2017

- Clinical aromatherapy for health professionals (external consultant, individual cost \$250)
- Holistic nursing certification prep – 3 days in a row (individual cost \$150)
- Holistic nursing certification prep – 1 day a month for 3 months (individual cost \$150)
- Holistic nursing certification prep – 6 weekly classes in 4 hours long (individual cost \$150)
- Healing touch level 1 – 2-day workshop (\$225 per module)
- Certification lunch and learn webinar – 1.5 hours (free)
- Nutrition for healing – 1 Hour Introduction (free)
- Massage/reflexology/acupressure 2-hour introduction (free)
- Massage/reflexology/acupressure – 2-day workshop (individual cost \$250)
- Holistic anxiety management – 1-hour workshop (free)
- Holistic pain management – 1-hour workshop (free)
- Retreat focused on self-care habits – 1 day (individual cost \$75)

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How to Provide Emotional Supports for Your Workforce
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-  INFOGRAPHIC
How to Be a Less-Stressed Leader
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-  BLOG POST
When Cleveland Clinic Staff are Troubled, They File ‘Code Lavender’
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External resources

[*Parkview Holistic Nursing*](#)

[*American Holistic Nurses Association*](#)

[*Code Lavender: A Tool for Staff Support*](#)

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