

# Mayo Clinic Q&A - Ryannon Frederick - Celebrating Nurses Wee...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

nurses, patients, mayo clinic, nursing, pandemic, nurse, care, role, healthcare transformation, chief nursing officer, healthcare, nursing staff, continue, rochester, excited, opportunity, provide, physicians, ability, health care

## SPEAKERS

Dr. Halena Gazelka, Ryannon Frederick, Narrator


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**N** Narrator 00:01  
Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A, we're celebrating Nurses Week.

**R** Ryannon Frederick 00:05  
Our nurses continued to be there for their patients, they continued to make sure that they each felt like they were individuals who were getting the best care in the world. Some of our outcomes that we saw during COVID are unlike any other healthcare. Our patient satisfaction actually increased during all of that. And that's really due to the excellence from our nursing staff.

**N** Narrator 00:29  
National Nurses Week promotes the nursing profession and celebrates a significant role that nurses play in the world of health care.

**R** Ryannon Frederick 00:36  
Mayo Clinic nurses are some of the most dedicated, expert clinical individuals that you will ever meet in your life. Their skills extend so far beyond the care that they provide to our patients. They are constantly thinking of the bigger picture of not just their patients but their peers and the entire healthcare team, and what is it going to take to help us provide even better care for our patients.



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Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:06

Welcome, everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm your host Dr. Halena Gazelka. Like many health care professionals, the COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful and challenging for nurses. Each year, May 6 to 12, is designated National Nurses Week to acknowledge and celebrate nurses and the hard work they put in to care for their patients. Joining us to discuss the important role of nurses at Mayo Clinic, is our chief nursing officer, Ryannon Frederick. Thanks for being here today, Ryannon.

R

Ryannon Frederick 01:37

Thank you so much for having me, Dr. Gazelka. I'm just so excited to be with you today.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:42

I am so excited about it too, because I truly feel that nurses are our unsung heroes. Countless patients when I see them in the clinic and in the hospital tell me it's the nurses that really made a difference. So, I'm excited to talk to you about that today. Ryannon, we like to get to know our guests here at Q&A. Can you tell us a little bit about your career journey, and what led you to Mayo Clinic?

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Ryannon Frederick 02:04

You know, I've been like many people at Mayo Clinic. I've worked at Mayo Clinic my entire career. I started my career with Mayo Clinic as a summer III, which is one of our nursing programs, a 10-week program which employs students who have completed their junior year of their nursing education. And so, as a junior at the University of Iowa, I saw this amazing opportunity in Rochester, Minnesota. I applied, and like so many of our summer III students, I had a life changing experience. I really knew that from the moment I stepped foot on the campus in Rochester that this is the place where I wanted to have my nursing career. And so, I was very, very fortunate to have a great experience with many amazing nurses who taught me what it was to be a professional nurse, who showed me the difference that Mayo Clinic makes in elevating patient care and the profession of nursing. And I was very fortunate to be offered a role at Mayo Clinic for when I graduated with my nursing degree. And so, I've been at Mayo Clinic ever since then.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 03:10

Well, someone made a good decision, because now here you are 23 years later. And you are Mayo Clinic's chief nursing officer. You came into that role, I believe just before COVID-19, so I'm sure it's been a little bit different than what you were expecting.

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Ryannon Frederick 03:26

Yes, very much. So yeah, I started my role as the chief nursing officer officially about three months before the pandemic hit us. And, you know, luckily I had some time to do some focus

groups with our staff and really heard what they were hoping for with the future of nursing at Mayo Clinic. Unfortunately, the pandemic hit, and it hit us hard. It impacted us within our walls and the way that we provide care with the patients that we see. It also impacted us very drastically outside of work because we're human beings outside of work. Part of my role as the chief nursing officer is to work collaboratively outside of the Department of Nursing, and to ensure that we are leveraging and aligned to advance the goals of the organization. We did that during the pandemic beautifully, but what we also had to do during the pandemic was prioritize some of those basic needs for our patients and our staff. And, you know, what excited me about the role was working with nurses to transform care. We are going to continue to do that, and we have continued to do it during the pandemic. It has really just expedited the need to do that as we move forward. So, not what I envisioned but definitely has given us even more leverage that the path that we were on was the right path, and we just need to continue to move forward.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:49

Well, when you talk about transforming care, never did you have an opportunity for that like COVID-19. It often occurred to me during the pandemic that I feel the nurses bore the brunt of that. Patients still had to be cared for in the hospital and elsewhere, even if we weren't seeing them in the clinic at the time. And so, what an amazing ability for your staff to adapt and continue to provide excellent care in the face of all kinds of uncertainty.

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Ryannon Frederick 05:21

Yes, the nurses were so flexible, and they are, they're always flexible nurses, PCAs, they're always flexible. But I think it even pushed the flexibility beyond what we'd ever imagined. You know, nurses are used to being that kind of caring healer at the side of the patients and their families. COVID pushed them. Their families weren't able to be here with them. So, they had to step in, in a whole different way than what they did before. We had to integrate technology with tablets to help communicate in completely different ways than what we did before. And if you think back early on in the pandemic, we weren't sure what we were dealing with. So, there was so much fear in the transmission of the disease, and are you safe when you go home. I mean, all of those different components, but throughout it all, our nurses continued to be there for their patients. They continued to make sure that they each felt like they were individuals who were getting the best care in the world. Some of our outcomes that we saw during COVID are unlike any other across healthcare. Our patient satisfaction actually increased during all of that. And that's really due to the excellence from our nursing staff. And when you just imagine all the stress and strain they were feeling, they continued to excel. And that's just the magic of Mayo Clinic nursing.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 06:43

There is some magic there. We know that nurses play a really critical role in patient care. Tell us about the various roles that the Department of Nursing encompasses.

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Ryannon Frederick 06:53

Oh, my goodness, we're the biggest clinical department across Mayo Clinic. So, today the Department of Nursing across the enterprise has over 22,000 people. The largest component of that, of course, is our nurses, both our registered nurses and our licensed practical nurses. We also have patient care assistants, we have patient care technicians, we've got social workers. There's just so many. We're all committed to working together as a team to provide care for our patients, their families, and each and every one of them is instrumental to the future of Mayo Clinic. One story I like to share is my Dad was actually a patient in one of our campuses. He had surgery about a year ago now, maybe a little over a year ago now. And I, as a nurse daughter, you know, sitting there watching, seeing this expertise from every individual that touched him, the nurses, the PCA, the social workers that came in. But what was so neat is, you know, he had one PCA in particular that he really connected with, and that PCA was just masterful at connecting with him as a person. And he's kind of, you know, a grumpy man sometimes, and she would make him laugh, and he would get out of bed like he needed to, and he would walk, and he would use his respiratory incentive spirometer every time she came in. And, you know, what I saw was skillful ability to connect with him on a human level that encouraged him to do what he needed to do to get healthy and better, faster. What he saw was just a person that cared about him. And so, it's just so cool to see all those different roles in our department come together to take such excellent care of our patients.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 08:38

Well, today marks the first day of Nurses Week, what would you like us to know about Mayo Clinic nurses?

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Ryannon Frederick 08:46

Mayo Clinic nurses are some of the most dedicated, expert clinical individuals that you will ever meet in your life. Their skills extend so far beyond the care that they provide to our patients. They are constantly thinking of the bigger picture of not just their patients, but their peers and the entire healthcare team, and what is it going to take to help us provide even better care for our patients. They contribute to the discovery of new knowledge. They also read nursing research and literature and apply that information to the care that they give to their patients. They also are really working hard to identify ways to be innovative in the way that we provide our care. Knowing that the way we've done in the past 5, 10, 15 years is not necessarily the right way to do it into the future. We are constantly working at trying to find new ways to excel so that each and every one of us are working at the top of our licensure because we know that that's what it's going to take in order for us to hit our 2030 Bold Forward goals. And on top of all of that skilled expertise, you will never meet a more compassionate, high touch, human connection than what our nursing staff provide at Mayo.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 10:12

What makes the expertise that our Mayo Clinic nurses have unique when they care for patients?

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Ryannon Frederick 10:19

**Ryannon Frederick 10:19**

That's a great question. And, you know, I think what I see that makes the expertise unique, is that Mayo Clinic, despite being really known across the world, for being the best nursing care, our nurses are so incredibly humble. And what they typically see is all of the areas where we could even be better. And so, while we're known for our innovation, and for our compassion, and our empathy, they're always seeing the gaps where we have opportunity to be even better for our patients, or even better for our team. And they work every single day to even those small little gaps to make them better. They do it in so many different ways. You know, they speak up and advocate on behalf of the patients, they contribute in their unit meetings, or with a multidisciplinary team to ensure that they're all working together on aligned goals for what the patient's need. We give them many opportunities to grow and develop as professionals, but they're the ones that take advantage of those because they see the value in their growth and development for themselves, but also for the betterment of their patients and their teams. I think one great example of this that I can think of is I did listening sessions with groups of diverse staff about two years ago now, and one of the items that came up was just an extremely dedicated nurse who spoke about we were missing the mark for our diverse patients because we didn't have appropriate hair products for them. And just by having the nurse elevate that feedback, we've given that individual a group, and they are working to identify what are the products that our diverse patients need? How do we test the products to ensure that they're the right ones? How do we stock them on the units? How do we make sure our staff know about these products? So, they take every opportunity to speak up and let us know where we're missing the mark for our patients, and then we engage them to be part of the solution to make sure that once we identify the problem, we also have a solution for it. And our nurses do this each and every single day. This is just one example. And to some people that might seem incredibly small. But when you think about the impact on patients, it's huge to feeling like they have a place at Mayo Clinic. So, that's one of the ways that their expertise really shines through.

**D Dr. Halena Gazelka 12:42**

I love that example Ryannon because just making an impact on one person, and then it it spreads out. It's wonderful. You said something earlier that made me think a little bit about our culture of safety here at Mayo. You said that nurses advocate, and I have had that experience many times with our nursing staff where, you know, we interact and they feel free to speak up and say, is this what you really want, or can we think about this way of doing this, or just bringing ideas forward. And I think that is incredible for patient care when we break down those artificial barriers between the different nurses, physicians, APPs, etc., and really just work together.

**R Ryannon Frederick 13:30**

Yeah, I will tell you, one of the beauties of my role is I have the opportunity to be on every campus, and I regularly ask the nurses, why do you stay at Mayo Clinic, what is it about Mayo Clinic that keeps you here? And what I hear from our nurses, hands down the top reason that they stay with Mayo Clinic is because of the way that the multidisciplinary team, the physicians, the nurses, the social workers, therapists, everybody cares about how we all work together to make it better for our patients. They talk about how they know that they can speak up, they know that they can ask questions, and how people take the time to educate each other, or explain why what we do for our patients is so incredibly valued by our staff, our nursing staff in

particular. And then what that does is it creates this venue where they feel safe asking questions, where they feel safe speaking up when they see opportunities for improvement because they know it might just be that they've missed something, or they don't understand. It might be that the health care team, the physician, the therapists miss something. And so, we all take that role of advocating for our patients very, very seriously. And we all know that speaking up is what helps our patients in the end. And so, we're just very fortunate to have an environment where the entire healthcare team creates that but also where our nurses are empowered to really be that voice when they see the opportunity.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 15:00

And Ryannon we know that many of our nurses go on to specialize or to obtain advanced training. Tell us a little bit about what is available for nurses. Some of our listeners may just think a nurse is a nurse, is a nurse, which in some ways is true, but they also specialize and go on to advance their skills.

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Ryannon Frederick 15:20

They do. And I will tell you, every single nurse graduates from school being a generalist, right? In nursing school, you get a little bit of every specialty, but not enough to necessarily be an expert in any of them. And so, what we do at Mayo Clinic is we really have a robust training program. Once you are through our doors, we have specialty training, depending on the unit that you're on, that really will help you grow in your expertise. It doesn't matter whether you're at one of our destination sites on a very sub specialized unit, or whether you're in the community setting. There is still that commitment to training you as a professional and the types of patients you're going to see on your unit. In addition to that we have many of our nurses that go on for either advanced training and education, many become certified in their specialty of choice. They maintain those highest credentials to really excel in the knowledge that they have in their ability to provide that sub-specialized care. Two examples that I would share that I think really help people understand how much we put into this, the first one is we have a CIP program. So, a career investment program at Mayo Clinic, where we've identified tracks that we think are pivotally important to continue to advance Mayo Clinic, to advance our patient care, and to advance our professional nursing staff. One of the new career investment programs is looking at PhD prepared nurses that can conduct nursing research. So, this is a huge shortage across the country. How do we know that the care that nurses are providing are really getting the benefit with the effort that we put into it? How do we maximize the interventions to ensure patients get what they need? We need more nursing researchers to do this. Our CIP program, I think we started with five slots that we were hoping to fill, we had over 13 people interested in that program, and we took them all, because we know not all of them will go on to become grant funded nursing scientists. Some of them will bring that nursing research knowledge and continue to provide patient care on our units, inpatient and outpatient, and advance the care, and advanced the profession as they do. So, we also have different tracks. Our Arizona campus, for example, has a care management track that they implemented this year to really help build some of that subspecialty knowledge, and help fill critical roles that we struggle with, because people don't always know how do they become prepared or skilled in that area. So, we really take that training and sub specialization really, really seriously, because that's another area that really makes Mayo Clinic special and unique.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 18:02

I am actually fascinated to hear about that Ryannon, and I was thinking in my head that patients often come to Mayo Clinic because the physicians, the scientists are very specialized and maybe have a have a special skill in one area that they are seeking. And little do they know, probably, that the nursing staff is the same, is very specialized and has training in care in that particular arena where they work. And that's really wonderful.

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Ryannon Frederick 18:34

It is, and it makes a difference every day to their outcomes. You know, when the nurses know the specific medications, the side-effects, their ability, as we spoke before, culture of safety, to question physicians or pharmacists if they see something, their ability to educate their patients around the why some of the treatment options are happening, that helps our patients be more aware of their treatment plan and also more committed to it, because they know the outcomes they should see.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 19:01

Ryannon, earlier we were talking about healthcare transformation and how some of that happened over COVID-19, and how we anticipate more for the future. How are Mayo Clinic nurses helping to lead transformation and the professional practice of nursing as well?

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Ryannon Frederick 19:18

This is one of the things I'm most excited about as we think about our future. And in order for us to be successful with healthcare transformation, nursing has to be leading. We're the ones that are closest to the patient. And so, we know the changes in the outcomes of the patient experience. But we also need to make innovation effective in a way that enhances their skills and abilities. So, there's so many ways right now that our nurses are leaning into innovation. We've got new care delivery models that we're developing. One amazing example is our virtual RN program. This is where we'll have a nurse who is a seasoned expert nurse who's overseeing a larger panel of patients that are in the hospital. We started this during COVID, and the intention was really to have a back-up as our nurses were stretched on the units to have a back-up set of eyes for them. What we learned is it is so efficient. You know, oftentimes in nursing to be extra safe, we have double eyes, you know, nurses will give insulin and they'll need a second pair of eyes just to verify the amount. So, the virtual nurse could do that. It also has somebody who has oversight to vital signs and physiological changes to the patients more easily because the data is right at their fingertips. And so, we could intervene quickly or more quicker than if the nurse who was on the floor was doing it independently. So, nurses are developing algorithms for that, they're helping us understand what works, what doesn't work, both for our patients, but also for our nursing staff. That's one example. I have five I could probably maybe just focus on two more I'll give you. I spoke a little bit about nursing research and nursing science previously. We have a nurse scientist that's joined our organization a year and a half ago. Her name is Heidi Lindroth, Dr. Heidi Lindroth. She has a goal to eliminate delirium for our patients. Heidi is a funded nursing scientist, but she also provides care in the NICU in Rochester. And so, she is really helping understand what are the clinical questions that

our nurses experience every day? And how do we translate that to nursing research to ensure that we're finding answers for those questions. So, really exciting work that will help us advance and innovate in health care. The last one that I'm really excited about is how do we help create that nursing workforce of the future in innovative ways. And so, one last example is we have in the Midwest, we have a partnership with our Rochester Public School District, and we actually have high school students that are getting their first introductory experience with health care by starting in an LPN program, our licensed practical nurse program. So, as part of their high school education, they are working with our Rochester Community and Technical College and becoming licensed practical nurses through the process. And so, they won't graduate high school, ready to go and join our healthcare workforce. But it also helps provide them to that wide array of professional roles in healthcare that they could go on and get advanced degrees for. So, really concrete ways that we're trying to transform health care for our patients, for our profession, and for the future of healthcare.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 22:28

Those are really inspiring examples, Ryannon, thank you. Tell me what are you most passionate about, and what do you hope for the future of nursing?

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Ryannon Frederick 22:38

That's a great question. You know, as I've thought about this, what I am most passionate about today is very similar to what I was most passionate about when I took this role 23 months ago. I am really excited to see nurses lead the future of healthcare and healthcare transformation. As I shared, the nurses are the closest to the patients, and they interact closely with all the team members to make sure that we're all coordinated in being the most effective that we can with how our patients' outcomes progress. So, what I'm really excited about is to continue to lead the best and the brightest group of nurses across the world, and how we're going to transform healthcare. I would say the one piece that's maybe evolved throughout the pandemic, is it's not only about transforming health care for our patients, and what their needs and wants are, but we also need to look at it through the unique lens of our nurses, and how we're going to transform in a way that truly enhances their skills and abilities. How we make the environment one where they feel excited and refreshed, and energized about the work that they're doing, and really feel like they're effective in the care that they provide. So, that is really where I am excited about the future of health care. Mayo Clinic, our strength comes from unity. We are always this united force, and this united team as we provide care for our patients. I'm really excited about continuing that united approach as we continue to provide the best care in the world for our patients. The last piece that I would say is I'm really excited about is how we grow the global presence of Mayo Clinic nursing. Over the last several years, we've added some nursing presence in our London campus and our Abu Dhabi practice, and, you know, really, Mayo Clinic nurses, as I mentioned before, they are so incredibly humble. They just put their head down and they do their work, but they don't necessarily realize that they're transforming care. And so, we need to have a stronger voice across the globe of the difference that nurses make and share our knowledge with other people so that we can continue to provide great health care for everyone.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 24:57



Well, we are excited about that future too, Ryannon. And thank you for being here today to kick off National Nurses Week.

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Ryannon Frederick 25:04

Thank you, Dr. Gazelka.

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Narrator 25:06

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