

Magnet Recognition



CASE STUDY: Building a Global Nursing Excellence Framework Using ANCC Magnet Recognition Program®

CLEVELAND CLINIC ABU DHABI

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BACKGROUND

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi (CCAD) was established to deliver complex, compassionate care while advancing research and education within the United Arab Emirates and the broader region. As part of the Cleveland Clinic enterprise, CCAD aspired from its earliest operational years to align with internationally recognized standards of nursing excellence. With a vision to be both *the best place to receive care* and *the best place to work in healthcare*, the organization embraced Magnet Recognition as a strategic framework to elevate nursing practice, leadership, and patient outcomes within a global context.

Unique to CCAD was the opportunity—and responsibility—to serve as a regional pioneer. As the first organization in the UAE to pursue Magnet Recognition, CCAD sought not only to strengthen its own professional practice environment but also to model a globally benchmarked nursing structure that could translate across cultures, clinical specialties, and healthcare systems.

CHALLENGE

CCAD's nursing workforce represented more than 50 nationalities, spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. While this diversity brought deep clinical expertise and global perspectives, it also introduced significant variability in familiarity with Magnet principles, professional practice models, and shared governance concepts.

Key challenges included:

- **Inconsistent exposure to Magnet and evidence-based practice frameworks** among nurses from varied healthcare systems
- **Variable engagement levels** influenced by prior professional norms and expectations
- **Early establishment of shared governance** in a young organization still defining its structures and processes
- **Ensuring alignment and consistency** in quality, safety, and professional development across units in a rapidly growing organization

Achieving a unified professional practice culture required intentional education, clear governance structures, visible leadership commitment, and sustained frontline engagement.

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

To overcome these challenges, CCAD implemented a deliberate, systems-based strategy grounded in Magnet principles and adapted for an international workforce.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

Shared Governance was introduced in the organization's second year as the foundational operating model for nursing. A tiered governance structure—from Unit-Based Councils to Coordinating Councils, Professional Practice Council, and Nursing Executive Council—ensured clear accountability, frontline ownership, and transparent escalation pathways.

DEDICATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

A formal **Magnet Program Director** role was established to provide strategic oversight, ensure alignment, and maintain continuity. Unit-level Magnet Champions supported engagement and sustainability at the bedside, embedding professional accountability into daily practice.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

CCAD invested heavily in professional growth through:

- Evidence-based practice and research seminars
- Journal clubs and Best Practice Sharing Forums
- Structured mentorship programs
- Alignment of governance participation with the professional ladder
- National and international conference participation

Leadership development was further strengthened through partnerships with the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.



Integration of Quality and Safety

Nursing partnered closely with Quality and Patient Safety teams to align metrics, reporting, and improvement efforts. Unit-level quality boards, daily multidisciplinary safety huddles, and PDCA methodology ensured consistent execution and continuous learning.

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WELLNESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing workforce sustainability as critical to excellence, CCAD embedded wellness initiatives throughout governance and culture. Programs included on-site fitness access, psychological wellbeing support, restorative activities, and wellness champions within governance councils.

RESULTS

The Magnet-aligned framework delivered measurable and sustained impact across the organization:

- Over **40 active shared governance councils**, collectively delivering an average of **10 initiatives per council annually**
- Consistently strong **patient experience outcomes** across inpatient and ambulatory settings
- High performance in **nurse-sensitive indicators**, including falls and pressure injuries
- **Staff retention rates in the single digits**, demonstrating workforce stability in a global labor market
- **More than 100% increase in specialty certification** among nurses in a single year
- Expansion of **nurse-led research**, posters, and podium presentations at national and international forums

CCAD earned its first Magnet® Recognition just 4 years and 7 months after opening to patients. In the 2024 Magnet designation cycle, CCAD received **16 exemplars**, reflecting sustained excellence across multiple Magnet components.

CCAD remains Magnet-recognized today, underscoring that Magnet is not a completed program but an ongoing framework for sustaining nursing excellence, continuous improvement, and organizational accountability.

OUTCOMES

“Magnet principles became embedded as how the organization works, rather than as a standalone accreditation effort.”

Beyond metrics, the most significant outcome was cultural transformation. Nursing practice shifted from hierarchical decision-making to authentic frontline ownership. Shared governance empowered clinical nurses to lead quality, safety, and wellbeing initiatives, while interdisciplinary collaboration strengthened outcomes beyond nursing alone.

Magnet principles became embedded as how the organization works, rather than as a standalone accreditation effort. This approach enabled CCAD to sustain excellence across multiple designations and integrate professional practice standards into daily operations, onboarding, education, and leadership strategy.

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CONCLUSION

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's Magnet journey demonstrates that international organizations can successfully implement globally recognized professional practice frameworks—even within highly diverse, multicultural workforces—when supported by intentional governance, leadership alignment, and investment in people.

By treating Magnet not as a destination but as an operating system for nursing excellence, CCAD built a sustainable, future-ready model that strengthens patient outcomes, workforce engagement, and organizational resilience. This case offers a replicable blueprint for international health systems seeking to elevate professional practice, empower frontline clinicians, and achieve measurable excellence across borders.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Sustainable nursing excellence is built through culture and infrastructure, not accreditation activities alone.
- Early implementation of a strong Shared Governance structure enabled frontline ownership of quality, safety, and professional practice.
- Dedicated Magnet leadership and visible executive support ensured alignment, continuity, and momentum.
- Ongoing investment in education, evidence-based practice, and leadership development empowered nurses to lead change.
- Embedding Magnet principles into daily operations ensured sustainability beyond designation cycles.

Discover how ANCC Magnet® Recognition helps organizations elevate nursing excellence and outcomes.
Contact magnet@ana.org to learn more.

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