

By Gloria Montgomery, CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas --Educational opportunities were an added bonus this year for Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center's (CRDAMC) nurses during this year's celebration of National Nurses Week.

From Human Papillomavirus (HPV) awareness and new baby vaccinations to medication reconciliations and secure messaging services, CRDAMC nurses learned about hospital improvements in various areas through evidence-based poster presentations, hosted by various CRDAMC clinics May 9 in the hospital's atrium.

"These are wonderful opportunities to learn something new on something I haven't studied or researched," said Lori Gardiner, a nurse practitioner in CRDAMC's general surgery department. "It's going to help me in my practice."

One particular board capturing a lot of attention was the Bennett Health Clinic's awareness campaign for HPV, a common, sexually transmitted disease that outranks chlamydia and is the number one cause of cervical cancer in women.

"We've given more than 4,200 HPV vaccines to high-risk Soldiers in the last 28 month," said Brenda Johnson, a licensed vocational nurse assigned to Bennett. "The vaccine can help protect our patients against 85-90 percent of those cancers."

According to Col. Jennifer Robison, CRDAMC's chief of nursing, Bennett' HPV evidence-based practices has drawn the attention of other military bases outside the Army, including Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in southern California.

"It just shows that what we do here can impact other commands outside of Darnall and the Army," she said.

Besides information awareness, Johnson said forums like the May 9 event provide teaching opportunities to the CRDAMC population.

"Nurses also are teachers," she said, "so this helps us to spread our message and educate others about the vaccine."

Graduate student and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) nurse Nina Gabriel stressed the importance of evidence-based practices in the delivery of health care.

"We always want our practice to be evidence-based, so these poster-board presentations allow us to display that evidence, so everyone can see," she said.

The forum also provided an opportunity to highlight some of the hospital's goals such as increased participation in relay health and secure messaging.

“The patients love it,” said Shelonda Parks, a licensed practical nurse with internal medicine, “because they don’t have to leave the house or work just to get medication refills or lab results. It definitely improves access to care.”

Another presentation generating a lot of attention was “The Golden Hour,” which detailed significant improvements in administering vaccinations to newborns diagnosed with neonatal sepsis.

“When we looked at our NICU practices, it was taking us 66 minutes on average to get the first dose on board,” said Allysson James, RN. “We realized there was a lot of room for change and improvement, so after implementation, we collected data for three months. The data we collected showed that we had decreased the mean time for antibiotic administration to 44 minutes.”

Shelly Park, a licensed vocational nurse, said the NICU presentation stood out more than the others because of the notable improvements in vaccination times.

“It was impressive how they increased their response time,” she said, adding that she found the poster-board presentations all very interesting. “It really just shows the awesome nurses in this facility, and how they are involved in the day-to-day process improvements on their units.”

National Nurses Week is a seven-day celebration to raise awareness of the critical role nurses have in saving lives and improving health. It begins annually May 6 and ends May 12 on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. This year’s theme was “Inspire, Innovate and Influence.”