

UNSUNG HEROES

Teams work behind the scenes to ensure positive patient experience.

When you're a patient at the hospital or visiting a loved one, you likely have face-to-face contact with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. But the clearly visible work performed at CalvertHealth is just the tip of the iceberg. Entire teams work to ensure daily operations at the hospital run smoothly and patients have a safe experience. Take a peek into the day-to-day lives of some of the hospital's unsung heroes – the people working diligently behind the scenes.

Infection Control Starts with Central Sterile Processing

Becki Jenkins, central sterile processing supervisor, manages a small but mighty team who are responsible for every instrument in the building that has to be used on a patient, ensuring supplies are sterilized. Central Sterile Processing is also involved in infection control processes, water quality processes and use instructions for equipment.

"Patients will never know your name and will never know what you did to make sure they had a safe experience," Jenkins said. "They appreciate you, but they don't know it's you they appreciate."

Infection control begins and ends with sterile processing. If an instrument is contaminated, everything is contaminated. It's a lot of responsibility to provide sterilized instruments across the entire hospital from the operating room to the emergency room one hundred percent of the time. In fact, the national average for central sterile errors is five percent. CalvertHealth's average is 0.01 percent – 98 to 99 percent lower than most other healthcare facilities in the country!

Sterilization isn't just pressing a button – there are five processes before equipment gets to the washers and four or five chemicals involved. Each piece of equipment has a different protocol. It takes five hours to sterilize a set of surgical instruments.

Jenkins said she is especially proud of her team during the height of COVID-19. Because of COVID, additional procedures had to be developed and additional chemicals used. During the shortages for masks and other protective equipment, the team had to process single-use masks. "Our little community hospital came up with a plan and did testing to make sure it was safe for our patients and our workforce. Our protocols ended up being utilized in other hospitals as far as New York City."



The Central Sterile Processing team oversees the meticulous processes to ensure every instrument in the entire facility is thoroughly sterilized.

Keeping the Lights On

A team of 13 individuals provide 24/7 service to maintain the physical environment of the hospital. If something needs fixed, this is the team that gets it done! The Plant Operations Department is responsible for all electrical services, HVAC, plumbing, power plant operation, fire and life safety and general maintenance of buildings and grounds. They make sure the lights are on, the water is running, the heat or air conditioning is functioning and the facilities at Calvert Health are maintained.

"We are the behind-the-scenes people who make sure the environment you stay in is like a four-star hotel," said **Stuart Simmons**, plant operations supervisor. It's crucial to ensure there's someone available to respond to every incident at all hours of the day or night.

Simmons' team must coordinate with other teams to ensure their work doesn't interfere with patient care. During the height of COVID-19, the medical staff and the plant operations staff worked to minimize the time Plant Operations' teams spent in rooms of COVID-positive patients when there were issues that needed attention in their rooms.

COVID also impacted how the team handles preventative maintenance of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems for the hospital. The team wears protective gloves and masks

when working on rooftop exhaust fans, for example.

"I feel very fortunate I can help the community this way," Simmons said. The plant operations team prides itself on having a family-like atmosphere, where every one pitches in as needed and has each other's backs.

Treating You Like Family

When a Patient Care Technician like **Brittney Johnson** enters a patient's room for a routine vitals check, there's a lot more happening in Johnson's mind than patients know about. During that routine check, Johnson checks respiration and conducts a head-to-toe assessment to determine if there's any changes which she needs to let the nurse know about.

"I do this because I love taking care of people," Johnson said. "It's not just a job to me, it's my career; it's my passion."

Johnson helps patients with daily activities like bathing, taking them to the bathroom, taking vitals, checking blood sugars, taking them for tests, performing CPR when needed and is at the bedside to help nurses and doctors perform bedside procedures. A major distinction between a Patient Care Technician and a nurse is that Patient Care Technicians do not administer medication.

COVID-19 required Johnson to relearn how to do her job since protocols were rapidly changing. She says she spent more time during COVID with patients – conversing with them and being present – to let them know they were loved and cared for while in the hospital. Johnson recalls a patient who hated being alone, so she would go in once an hour and watch TV and hold her hand. "I knew I had to make time to do that because if it was my family member in the hospital, I would hope and pray that someone would sit with them," Johnson said. "I treat my patients as if they were my own family members."



A Vital Link to Quality Outcomes

Sometimes referred to as housekeeping or janitorial services, environmental services (EVS) is a term used exclusively in healthcare to describe the process highly trained support service staff conduct to clean and disinfect medical equipment, patient rooms and other common areas within the hospital setting.

EVS technicians ensure a safe environment for everyone in the facility. They work closely with clinical staff and frequently interact with patients.

"We give it 100 percent every day. We do the work and make sure it's done right," said **William Stepney** who has been with the EVS team at CalvertHealth for almost 10 years. He added, "We take a lot of pride in keeping our hospital nice and clean for our patients and their families." Primarily assigned to the OR, Stepney is one of the technicians trained to use the Surfacide UV disinfection system which uses three towers and laser mapping technology to ensure all surfaces have been effectively cleaned and sterilized. CalvertHealth has been utilizing the technology for more than eight years.

A detailed EVS training process, such as the one implemented at CalvertHealth, ensures the EVS staff knows the importance of their role and the established safety standards and regulations that should



William Stepney (top left) and other members of the Environmental Services team (top) are highly trained to clean and disinfect equipment, patient rooms and other common areas. Patient Care Technician Brittney Johnson (above) treats her patients like family. The Plant Operations team (below) plays an important role in patient care by making sure CalvertHealth facilities are well maintained.

be followed - whether it's using cleaning products or handling body fluids/ preventing infection transmission. And according to Stepney, the team at CalvertHealth is the best at what they do.

"I'll brag just a little. I think we are the best in our area. Not only do we keep everything clean, we are courteous to patients and try to assist everyone we come in contact with. It's a good feeling to help people," said Stepney.

