

2020 Mary Decker Mentorship Award

Patricia Zrelak, PhD RN FAHA NEA-bc CNRN SCR N PHN

Nominated by Cynthia Soto



I am writing to strongly endorse XXXX for the 2020 American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) Mary Decker Mentorship award. Having had the pleasure of working alongside XXXX in her role as Clinical Practice Consultant for the Comprehensive Stroke Center program at XXXX. If it were not for XXXX joining our team 3.5 years ago, our high-volume program would not be where we are today, “The Best of the Best”, as described by The Joint Commission (TJC) with some of the consistently fastest national door to treatment times for patients with stroke.

Attributes that make XXXX an outstanding mentor include: Her willingness to share skills, knowledge, and expertise; consistent demonstration of a positive attitude and being a positive role model; her personal interest in the mentoring relationship and empowerment of mentees to develop their own strengths, beliefs, and personal attributes; her enthusiasm in neuroscience nursing; her commitment to ongoing learning and growth in the field; her consistent guidance and constructive feedback to those around her; the respect she has from colleagues in all levels of the organization; her ability to set and meet ongoing personal and professional goals including pushing and pulling others to do the same; and her commitment to doing the right thing. Listed below are just a sample of specific and recent examples of why I believe XXXX deserves this prestigious mentoring award.

Because of XXXX’s direct mentorship:

1. Staff throughout our region have presented podium presentations at esteemed International, National, Regional and local conferences. This includes World Federation of Neuroscience Conference in Croatia, International Stroke Conference (ISC), Annual

AANN Education Conference, Kaiser Permanente National Stroke Conference, Western Institute of Nursing, local AANN events, and other nationwide events. This was the first time most staff have presented at such conferences. In addition, one of her direct mentees has two accepted podium presentations for the 2020 ISC conference and another has an accepted session.

2. Staff have presented numerous poster presentations at respected International, National, Regional and local conferences. This includes multiple poster presentations at the ISC. For most staff, this is the first time they have presented a poster at a conference. Her mentorship ranges from ideas to helping organize and fine-tune submissions.
3. Staff are conducting evidence-based practice projects related to neuroscience including the 14-best practices recognized by TJC at our most recent Comprehensive Stroke Certification site review.
4. Staff have been involved in the development and submission of two major grants related to neuroscience practice. Mentees on the grant include the entire grant team consisting of physicians, nurses, other therapists, and administrators.
5. Staff have successfully submitted for IRB approval so that they can publish on their efforts to improve care for patients with a neuroscience related injury.
6. Knowledge and skills of staff working throughout our healthcare system have improved as she provides ongoing education for staff including annuals skills, annual stroke education, neuroscience skills, and other related classes. In addition, she works with our unit -based committees, such as the Neuro ICU Committee, in conducting additional education events such as our Annual Neuroscience Symposium and Neuro Basics classes.
7. She has also organized (and taught) annual SCRN, CNRN and CCRN courses along with national SCRN review classes. In each of these classes, she has included staff in the planning and teaching of content. She also is a guest lecturer at other facilities, including local Universities and is a member of the KP National Stroke Conference Executive Committee.
8. We now have over 30 Emergency Neurological Life Support certified RNs working in our ICU and most of the hospital-based physicians are now certified or in the process of becoming ENLS certified.
9. Staff are obtaining advance degrees. She consistently mentors at least 2 students per year from various Universities.
10. Stroke Coordinators and others within and outside the system seek out her advice, especially given her prior experience as a Joint Commission reviewer. This includes having her conduct site visits and working with local staff.

11. She provides ongoing education on evidence-based practice and is working with several individual staff members on publishing their projects including interesting clinical case studies. She also works very closely with the hospital evidence-based practice committees and has offered classes in Evidence Based Practice and Publishing. As a doctorly prepared epidemiologist, all levels of staff within our larger system seek out her expertise in research (including study design and statistics).

12. The XXXX Chapter of AANN has expanded to include all hospital systems in part due to her past-leadership. Several of the current board members are direct mentees (President and President elect). She also served on several AANN boards and committees.

13. Our organization now offers an outpatient stroke education class for patients and their families that she designed and is the lead instructor.

In addition, she has been instrumental in bringing new research projects to our facility; is a frequent reviewer for several journals including the Journal of Neuroscience Nursing, where she provides mentorship for submitters; is the lead author on the AANN Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Reference guide where she is mentoring the junior members of the writing team; and is a sought after national board and committee member. Currently, she is a member of the AHA/ASA Stroke Systems of Care Advisory Group, BSN Advisory Board for William Jessup University, and Technical Expert Panel member on Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Measure & Instrument Development and Support Committee. Past work includes work on national quality measures, several of which target neuroscience and vascular care. She is also the AHA/ASA nominee for the National Quality Forum Consensus Committee.

XXXX is a strong advocate for patient safety. She has led the efforts to decrease the use of unsafe neuroscience abbreviations (such as “tPA” for alteplase and “TNK” for tenectapase)¹. These efforts include writing an editorial for the JNN and writing directly to organizations, such as the AHA/ASA. She has also served on a national Joint American Nurses Association/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ANA/CDC) Working Group (WG) on how to engage nurses in antibiotic stewardship.

XXXX has also been instrumental in serving as a personal mentor for me. I am in awe of all she has contributed to neuroscience nursing, including her publications, presentations, research, and innovative ideas. She has also inspired me to go back to pursue my doctorate degree. In that pursuit, I have chosen her as my mentor as I couldn't think of a more supportive, inspiring, and knowledgeable person to guide me along my journey. XXXX is a true asset to the neuroscience field and our organization as she has helped elevate our program, our nurses, and the integrate best practices to best meet the needs of the patients we serve.

I encourage you to strongly consider awarding XXXX the 2020 Mary Decker Mentorship award.