Nomination for the AANN Excellence in Neuroscience Education Award

Dear AANN Excellence in Neuroscience Education Award Committee,

Congratulations on finding this year's winner of the Excellence in Neuroscience Education Award! You see, our colleague & nominee embodies each quality this award represents. The impact and difference they have made at our institution is singular; we can think of no candidate more deserving of this honor. (By letter's end, you'll feel the same).

To select and isolate examples of this nurse's commitment to their field is impossible; there are hundreds of instances when this nurse's expertise, experience, and compassion have positively affected the trajectory of a nurse's career or patient's recovery. Her commitment to the field of neuroscience nursing is felt acutely in the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students she mentors. To see her work and talent reflected in the careers of countless nurse graduates is a beautiful and quintessential testimony to her character.

Her effect is felt in her dedication, responsiveness, and ethos. With more than two decades of experience, this nurse is readily recognized as a subject matter expert in neuroscience nursing within clinical, education, and administrative space– in no small part to the countless hours she dedicates to nursing education and staff development. She is incredibly agile: equally quick in responding to units to provide just-in-time interventions as she is participating in C-Suite meetings to create clinical practice that is safe and sustainable. She is universally seen as a leader, resource, advocate, ally, and mentor. At our large, academic, and tertiary medical center, she stands head and shoulders above a deep pool of competent and engaged nurses.

This nominee has developed and implemented numerous hospital-wide neuroscience, neurocritical care, neurotrauma, and neurosurgery policies and procedures that directly impact the care of brain-injured patients. Examples of her pioneering work include policies on cranial procedure post-operative hair washing, standardizing nursing care of high-risk lumbar and externalized ventricular drains, and surgical site infection (SSI) protocols. Her leadership in multidisciplinary collaborations has led to the safe implementation of a novel process to ensure periprocedural safety of craniotomy patients receiving a fluorescent agent, 5-ALA, yielding results of over 4 years of success with no observed adverse reactions. Additionally, she has developed extensive independent and virtual training modules on a multitude of topics including bedside dysphagia screening, NIH Stroke Scale (NIHSS) scoring, organ donor patient care, stroke center certification nursing care, and neuroscience nursing-focused virtual journal club articles. These actions have a broad ripple effect; as the flagship institution for our system, what is implemented at our facility Is often adapted in our network of hospitals. The independent study modules she has designed and updated have fostered greater competency among nursing staff and improved patient outcomes for stroke patients across and beyond our state. This is clearly and objectively measured by successful hospital stroke surveys most recently resulting in no requirements for improvement related to bedside neuro ICU nursing care. In addition to creating much of the content and structure for these initiatives, this nurse is the front-line educator and can frequently be seen facilitating bedside or classroom education for nurses.

This nominee participates daily in ICU rounds across each of our institutions three neuro and trauma ICUs. In these spaces, this nurse frequently coordinates and supports point-of-care in-service

sessions, deftly coaching and correcting in a safe, non-confrontational, and non-judgmental way. It is this unique gift that has made her the first call for many bedside nurses, colleagues, advance practice providers, and physicians. A natural communicator, this nurse easily supports the neuro patient and bedside nurse by coordinating multidisciplinary input on complex cases, facilitating realistic trainings, and engaging in quality improvement initiatives like vendor rounding to bedside nurses and providers to educate on cervical collar and thoracolumbar sacral orthosis (TLSO) brace care to prevent medical device-related pressure injuries in the neurotrauma patient population. Her support extends through stroke survey preparation, vendor rounding, and Neuro Nurse Week activities that emphasize advanced spinal cord perfusion pressure techniques. This nominee's impact with education in neurotrauma is seen through our hospital's bi-monthly multidisciplinary Team Trauma Educational sessions. Her thoughtful, evidence-based teaching discussions have helped to solidify a culture of continual learning and improvement.

This nominee demonstrates her commitment to staff development by designing and leading more than a half dozen courses for both new and seasoned nurses. She remains an active planner and contributor to our healthcare system's annual Neuroscience Conference and Critical Care Symposium, sharing her expertise to help elevate the quality of care across hospitals and departments. Her day-to-day instruction spans diverse and critical areas, including our Donor Course, competencies (for neurovascular ICU, neurotrauma ICU, surgical trauma ICU, Rapid Response, emergency department, four neuroscience acuity adaptable units, and hospital-wide nursing and support staff sessions), the Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) RN introductory class, and the Critical Care, Trauma Nurse, Transplant Grand Rounds, Neuroscience Nurse, and New Nurse Residency courses. The New Nurse Residency courses support staff development for a nurse's first year working in our institution. As faculty New Nurse Residency, this nominee frequently has between 4 to 7 nurses per session on whom she conducts routine rounding and check-ins. Her mentorship in these spaces has directly contributed to the psychological safety and longevity of new nurses.

As an invited faculty member and speaker, this nominee's influence reaches far beyond our institution. Her presentations have resonated nationally, with highlights including three Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) talks, multiple winning hospital Quality & Safety Fair posters, and a Best Poster win at the AANN Advances in Stroke Care Conference in 2020. Additionally, she has presented at the Southwestern Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (SWPONL) and health system-led Stroke Conferences, sharing critical updates on stroke, neurocritical, neurosurgical, and organ donor nursing care. Her thoughtful and engaging teaching style at these events has made her a highly sought-after speaker and educator.

This nurse's dedication to neuroscience nursing also includes developing independent study modules and distance learning programs, such as the Organ Donation for Hospital System and CSC Learning modules, which cater to RNs and support staff alike. She also spearheaded the Quality Assurance Process Improvement (QAPI) project involving the Rapid Response Team time of death model and the End-of-Life Red Packet initiative, providing invaluable educational resources to nurses throughout our large hospital for diverse populations.

It is clear that this nominee exemplifies the traits the AANN would aspire to recognize in this award. Her mentorship and leadership are present in every educational interaction, authentically fostering the growth of her colleagues with unwavering support and guidance. Her role as a mentor has been

transformative, and her impact on neuroscience nursing education and practice is profound. Numerous nurses and colleagues she has mentored have gone on to pursue advanced degrees & certifications, receive national and local professional awards, and contribute to the neuroscience nursing profession through publications, podium, and poster presentations at local, national, and international conferences.

This nominee is clearly an exemplary candidate for the AANN Excellence in Neuroscience Education Award. She has consistently demonstrated a profound dedication to advancing neuroscience nursing education, both within our institution and the wider medical community. Her contributions are invaluable, and this award would be a fitting recognition of her exceptional service to our field.

Thank you for your commitment to recognizing amazing neuro nurses (like this nominee!) and the incredible, lifesaving work they do.