

# UW Health: Highlights its first ever nurse scientist

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MADISON, Wis. – To close out National Nurses Week, UW Health is spotlighting the health system's inaugural nurse scientist, Élise Arsenault Knudsen.

Arsenault Knudsen has been in healthcare for nearly 20 years and spent the last 16 years at UW Health before becoming the health system's first nurse scientist in 2021.

It is a common misconception that nurses are only at the bedside, when we can actually have many roles, she said.

Arsenault Knudsen provides the evidence-based vision and strategy for the resources and infrastructure nurses use. With a PhD in nursing, her efforts are guided by research, both existing resources and her own ongoing work.

Nurses want to know how to ensure best outcomes for their patients and the nurse scientist role works with nurses across the health system to support their practice in many areas, everything from fall prevention to infection prevention to promoting nurse wellbeing, according to Arsenault Knudsen.

“Nurses are now my patients. I am not directly at the bedside anymore, but I support thousands of nurses to provide the best care possible to their patients,” Arsenault Knudsen said. “Nurses are problem solvers by nature, so it's empowering for us to use evidence-based practices to improve health outcomes.”

In the fall of 2020, Arsenault Knudsen supported UW Health's goal to improve nurses' wellbeing. She conducted a literature review to seek evidence-based interventions, and sought input from UW Health's Shared Governance Councils, encouraging nurses to ask questions and provide insight on what they needed.

“It became clear that this needed to be more than a project, it needed to be woven into the structure of nursing,” she said. “From that, a new Nursing Wellbeing Council was developed.”

Arsenault Knudsen is proud to have found her place as UW Health’s first nurse scientist.

“It is very rewarding to be a part of advancing the profession of nursing and to optimize patient care,” she said.

A recorded interview and B-roll with Arsenault Knudsen are available.