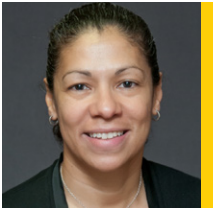


2022 Veterans Achievers Award Winners



WINNERS



Mildred Chernofsky, M.D., FACOG
Sibley Memorial Hospital
Assistant Professor, Gynecology and Obstetrics

Mildred Chernofsky provides expert medical care to the military community and the community at large. As a gynecologic oncologist, she is a detailed and thorough provider who spends significant time not only operating on and caring for her patients, but also ensuring smooth care coordination and quality of life. She works with navigators within the TriCare and military community to make sure patients who need her specialty care have access to the care they need. She goes above and beyond to ensure these services are available to all, especially the military community.

Chernofsky served in the United States Navy for many years. Since completing her years of service, she has been active in the community in addition to her primary role as a gynecologic oncologist. She volunteers with Maryland Latinos Unidos, a local Latino nonprofit organization that works to increase access to care and support for Latino and immigrant communities. She is an active member of the Society of Gynecologic Oncology, and stays up to date on the latest research and clinical trials in her field to provide better care to her patients. She is an avid dog lover, and volunteers for and donates to many local animal organizations.

A natural leader, teacher and caregiver, Chernofsky treats each patient as a whole and focuses not only on their medical condition but also their quality of life and relationships. She is a wonderful teacher to her staff and her patients. With a multidisciplinary approach to patient care, she treats all patients with dignity and respect, and will go the extra mile to ensure her patients are cared for.



Daniel Gruber, M.D., M.S., FACOG, FPMRS
Sibley Memorial Hospital
Assistant Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics

Daniel Gruber provides complex medical care to military service members and civilians in his primary role as a urogynecologist and surgeon. In addition, he spends countless hours pouring into the education of future medical professionals and the community alike. He teaches urogynecology residents, physical therapists and medical students from institutions throughout the Washington, D.C./Maryland/Virginia region, both within the military community and in the community at large. An Air Force veteran who retired at the rank of colonel after 22 years of active duty, Gruber served as the director of resident education at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. He is on the Clinical Competency Committee for the Gyn/Ob residency and the female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (FPMRS) fellowship, and he was the chair of the FPMRS Fellowship Research Assessment Committee.

Gruber's primary role as a urogynecologist is life-changing for many women — his interventions improve their quality of life and give autonomy, confidence and independence back to his patients. In addition to this role, he spends significant time aiding the military and civilian community and those who are not his patients. He frequently gives presentations and participates in speaking engagements; most recently, he spoke at the Johns Hopkins Hospital women and bladder cancer support group, spoke at Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii, about vulvar pain control, presented to the Sibley oncology department about vaginal estrogen in patients with breast cancer, and created a FPMRS surgical course with video training for the American Physical Therapy Association.

Gruber strives daily to provide the best and up-to-date care for his patients. He provides a safe environment for patients to discuss their concerns openly. The excitement he has about urogynecology is infectious, and has a positive impact on patients and staff alike. He inspires all around him to be the best, and takes every opportunity he can to teach anyone who will listen. He is an excellent role model for all who work with him. He is an asset to Johns Hopkins Medicine, the military community and the civilian community alike.

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WINNERS



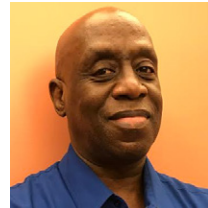
Jessica Hernandez, RN, CEN
*Howard County General Hospital
Clinical Coordinator, Day Shift, Emergency
Room*

Jessica Hernandez is an emergency room (ER) nurse and Navy veteran. She played an integral part in getting her department through several upgrades, renovations, staff turnover and the COVID-19 pandemic — all of which are crucial given it is the only emergency room in the county.

Hernandez participates in a number of service projects, including annual Christmas gift wrapping at the local mall, contributing and collecting food for local food banks during the pandemic, helping every Christmas with a toy and gift drive for less fortunate families in Howard County and dropping off toiletries to a local domestic violence shelter. In 2021, she assisted with a clothing and diaper collection for Afghan refugees in Baltimore.

Hernandez and her nurse colleagues are not afraid to take a stand and participate in key social justice marches and moments. She is a strong advocate for voting and women's rights, and recently protested on the steps of the United States Capitol with other veterans to help get the PACT Act passed.

On the day shift, Hernandez is often the person everyone goes to in the ER to get problems solved. She has participated in quality control projects to improve management of cardiac arrest patients, and she schedules shifts for ER nurses monthly, which requires attention to detail because of the many moving parts. Hernandez is well regarded and respected by everyone from physicians and new graduate nurses to staff and agency nurses and techs.



Alfonzo Witherspoon
*The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Unit Associate*

Alfonzo Witherspoon is a Marine, and is well known by his colleagues on Weinberg 4B. Known as “Mr. Alfonzo” by co-workers and patients alike, he touches the lives of oncology patients and their families every day. Some of them have needed a ride home or a prayer — and he is there to help. Patients know him by name because they remember his kindness. When a patient could not pay for a medical prescription, Witherspoon covered the bill. When he learned another patient did not have enough money to pay for discharge prescriptions, Witherspoon stepped up and paid the bill.

Witherspoon's generosity extends beyond the hospital. He tells the story of how he became a born-again Christian many years ago, and one of his acts of kindness is to cook and deliver food to Baltimore's homeless community. He serves the food — chicken wings, macaroni and cheese, beef stew and chili — from the back of his car and asks to pray with those who come to eat. Colleague Amy Brown attests to these homecooked meals, because Witherspoon often cooked for her father, who was also a veteran. Witherspoon would bring food to work for her to take it to her father, who loved the homemade dishes (his favorite was the chili). When her father died in August of 2021, Brown didn't know what to do with some of his coats. Witherspoon volunteered to take them to the veterans shelter for her.

Witherspoon once wrote on an employee self-evaluation, “People should be able to see that there is something different about you without you boasting or speaking on your gifts.” He truly leads by example with his actions, his kindnesses and his attention to others. He brings a brightness to Weinberg 4B and to the lives of patients — many of whom have grim diagnoses — and their families. Witherspoon is often the bright light in their day when he brings them fresh water, engages in conversation with them as he makes their beds or transports them to radiology. He is a classic example of how to treat people and how to be your best self in the workplace. A patient's husband once said this about Witherspoon: “I call him the ‘glue guy’ because he holds everything together. He's a Marine, and I was in the Air Force. I told him, ‘Semper Fi’ and he knew what I meant — always faithful.”

2022 Veterans Achievers Award Winners



FINALISTS



Ro Bowman, B.S.N., B.A.
*The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Specialty Nurse, Nursing
Administration*

Ro Bowman is a nurse and veteran with a warrior spirit that carries through to her work with patients. She puts the interests of others ahead of her own to make sure patients — some of whom are recently discharged veterans or the offspring of servicemembers — receive quality care.

Bowman's work with the transgender/nonbinary community improves access and care for *all* veterans and their families. She listens to the veterans' stories and creates space for them to process the complicated feelings that often come with being transgender in the military. She puts these patients at ease when they learn she is a veteran herself.

Always open to feedback from patients and teammates, Bowman consistently looks for ways to improve access for patients and will always advocate for them. Recently, Bowman has begun to provide clinician-to-clinician trainings on how to provide gender affirming health care to other Johns Hopkins Medicine nurses. She is an awesome example of a colleague who respects and supports everyone's gender identity and pronouns, and is an asset to her team.



Gosia Ryan, M.S.N.
*The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Program Coordinator, Clinical
Informatics*

Gosia Ryan is active in the Army Reserve while maintaining her position as a registered nurse and program coordinator with the nursing clinical informatics team at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. She is a resource for the military community, helping to support and serve during critical times. She also attends regular training seminars to grow her professional development and leadership skills. These critical skills benefit both the military and the role she delivers in the hospital.

Ryan comes from a military family, and has a heart for service. As a member of the reserves, she is selfless and stands ready to be of service to the military when the need arises. She routinely goes to specialized training sessions to increase her knowledge, strengthen her leadership and grow her nursing career, which ultimately benefits her role at the hospital and in the military. Ryan teaches classes within the Reserve, and is now using her expertise to train the next generation of military leaders. She is very approachable, making it easy for colleagues to trust her to deescalate challenges. She leads a number of health care initiatives at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, including the nursing workload scoring project.

Committed to performing her military drills and training exercises, Ryan's efforts were recently rewarded when she was promoted to lieutenant colonel. She is dedicated to helping improve the lives of others with her knowledge and expertise from both her military background and her experience working in health care. She is a hands-on nurse, always working behind the scenes to create ways to improve health care. Ryan's energetic personality enables her to be top notch in all she does, whether it's managing projects in her military career, making improvements in her health care career or balancing her work and family life with her husband while raising two small children. No matter the role, Ryan goes above and beyond to do what is needed, and is admired and respected by all who know her.

2022 Veterans Achievers Award Winners



FINALIST



William Whitfield

*Johns Hopkins Health Care
Call Center Manager,
Customer Service*

William Whitfield leads his team with the motto, “Customer Service is not a department, it’s a philosophy to be embraced.” He and his staff provide dedicated service to the 53,000 members enrolled in the U.S. Family Health Plan, a managed care program sponsored by the Department of Defense as a designated provider of TRICARE Prime. Whitfield leads by example with the care and compassion he shows the active duty family members, retirees and their dependents. He recognizes how unique the population is, which is why military culture training is incorporated into the onboarding process for the customer service department.

As an advocate for United Way, Whitfield participates in a number of the organization’s events. During the annual giving campaign, he shares the story about the support his in-laws received in the aftermath of a horrific fire. “The representatives were warm, overwhelmingly pleasant and compassionate,” he recalls. United Way helped to secure temporary shelter, clothing, food and toiletries. For the next week, someone from United Way continued to assist until a temporary residence was located and the family was settled in. What could have been a devastating tragedy had a happy ending, thanks to United Way.

Whitfield is committed to exceptional quality and service. He sets the tone for the team with his own dedication. He is a role model and mentor, genuine and empathetic. He listens and invites others to share their experiences. His kindness and friendly demeanor make him a joy to work with.