



SHIRL JOHNSON

*Director, Clinical Effectiveness and Quality
Norton Healthcare*

by Michael L. Jones

Although she grew up in Dayton, OH, Shirl D. Johnson spent most of her summers in New York City visiting an aunt, who often took the teenager to work with her. "She was a nurse," Johnson remembered. "This was before HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), so nurses could do things like that that they can't do today. The experience steered me towards a career in healthcare."

Johnson and her brother were raised by a single mother, Delores, who worked at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Inspired by her aunt, Johnson earned an associate's degree in nursing from Kentucky State University in 1984 and a bachelor's degree in the field from Wright State University in 1992. She also holds master's degrees in nursing and hospital administration, and is in the process of finishing her doctorate in nursing at Bellarmine University.

Johnson is Director of Clinical Effectiveness and Quality for Norton Healthcare. Her job entails making sure all the facilities in the healthcare system meet regulatory requirements and she spearheads projects designed to improve the system's work processes. Johnson led efforts to centralize patient placement and implement the recycling of single-use devices that combined save Norton more than \$800,000 each year. She is currently leading an initiative to implement a system for tracking patient readmissions. Although Johnson knew she was destined for a career in healthcare, she never expected to be on the management side of the field.

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"I am a registered nurse," she explained. "My specialty is critical care, open-heart surgery. My career took a turn when I received Six Sigma Lean and Black Belt certification, a set of techniques for process improvement and quality management. The company I was working for in Ohio before I came to Norton was called Premier Health Partners. I was selected as one of six folks in the hospital system to receive this specialized training over two years."

Johnson was Nurse Manager of the 36-bed Telemetry Unit of Good Samaritan Hospital, a Premier facility, when she received her special certifications. In 2007, she moved to Louisville to become System Director of Performance Improvement for Norton. She has been in her current position since 2011.

Outside of work, Johnson enjoys reading mystery novels, traveling, and doing volunteer work in the community. She is involved in a mentoring program at King Elementary. Johnson is also a member of several honorary and professional societies including Strathmore achievement in Healthcare, The National Association of Healthcare Service Executives, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Chair for the Louisville Federal Credit Union, Co-Leader for the African American Employee Work Group and a member of the American Nurses Association.

Johnson lives in the Jeffersontown area. This Buckeye admits it took a while for her to become acclimated to living in the Bluegrass state. "There was a big cultural change between Ohio and Kentucky," she said. "Derby was especially a big change. I just didn't know. I would try to schedule meetings during Derby Week and no one would accept. Finally, someone said, 'Shirl, you don't know the rules do you?' Now, I've been briefed."

