

America's Best in Medicine Highlights Susan McKay, BSN, RN: Clinical Research Nurse & Financial Wellness Advocate

Susan Kailani McKay, BSN, RN, CGRN, Advances Clinical Research and Patient-Centered Innovation in Oncology and Critical Care



a seasoned registered nurse with more than nine years of diverse clinical experience, continues to elevate patient care standards in oncology research and acute care settings across Philadelphia. Currently serving as a Clinical Research Nurse at the University of Pennsylvania, McKay plays a pivotal role in advancing Phase I–IV clinical trials while championing a patient-first philosophy rooted in compassion, precision, and equity.

In her current role, Susan collaborates closely with Research Team Leaders and Principal Investigators to initiate and manage investigator-initiated and industry-sponsored trials. She oversees complex oncology study protocols, including the administration and monitoring of chemotherapeutic agents, biologic response modifiers, and cellular immunotherapies. Her expertise spans comprehensive clinical data review, adverse event reporting, and interdisciplinary coordination across laboratory, infusion, radiology, inpatient, and pharmacy teams. Susan’s work directly supports the development of emerging therapies for leukemia patients, ranging from young adults to geriatric populations.

Prior to her work in research, McKay served as a Certified Gastroenterology Registered Nurse at Jefferson University Hospital, where she provided high-volume interventional endoscopy care to up to 85 patients daily. She assisted in advanced procedures, including stone extraction, biliary stenting, fine needle aspiration, endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD), and peroral endoscopic myotomy (POEM). Known for her systems-thinking mindset, she developed streamlined pre-procedure patient education protocols to improve compliance, safety, and overall care continuity.

Susan’s clinical foundation was shaped through critical care roles at leading institutions, including the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and Hahnemann University Hospital. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she served on the front lines as an agency critical care nurse, managing ventilated patients, titrating vasoactive medications, administering blood products, and supporting families through unprecedented healthcare challenges. Her earlier oncology and hematology work at Sentara CarePlex Hospital further strengthened her expertise in chemotherapy administration, central line management, and sickle cell crisis intervention.

A graduate of Eastern University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Susan holds active RN licensure in Pennsylvania and maintains certifications in Basic Life Support (BLS) and Gastroenterology Nursing (CGRN). Guided by her belief that healthcare is a human right, not a privilege, Susan remains committed to innovative, equitable, and evidence-based practice—advancing both clinical research and bedside care to improve outcomes for patients and communities alike.

Learn more about Susan McKay:

Through her America’s Best in Medicine profile, <https://americasbestinmedicine.com/connect/susan-mckay>

America’s Best in Medicine

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