



Photo by Robert Lahser / MCT / Newscom.

On our cover this month, eight-year-old Bikram Thapa shows off the scar on his chest after undergoing surgery to repair a congenital heart defect at the Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. Bikram, a refugee from Bhutan, has struggled to breathe since birth.

Many children like Bikram have undergone surgery for congenital heart disease (CHD). Boston Children's Hospital estimates that nine out of every 1,000 infants born in the United States are born with a congenital heart abnormality, and that one-third of these need intervention to prevent death in their first year. It is now known that problems can occur years after CHD repair, and that ongoing cardiology follow-up is essential to prevent or detect serious complications.

Unfortunately, many of those who had CHD surgery as children have not had regular follow-up, and so these complications often come to light when the now-adult patient seeks care in a noncardiac setting. For this reason, it is important for all nurses, not just those in the cardiac setting, to be aware of CHD and of its long-term complications, which can be related either to the disease itself or to the specific repair. For more on congenital heart defects, how they are repaired, and their long-term outcomes, see this month's CE feature, "Long-Term Outcomes After Repair of Congenital Heart Defects: Part 1."—*Michael Ferguson, senior editorial coordinator* ▼

On the Web

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WHAT WE'RE BLOGGING ABOUT

- "Knowing when to adhere to protocol, or not, in the best interest of the patient requires skill, experience, and a bit of luck," Julianna Paradisi writes in her post, "Patient Safety, Patient Advocacy: In Pediatric Nursing, A Tricky Balance" (<http://wp.me/prthD-4Ts>).
- In "Always a Nurse," Janice M. Scully reflects on her mother's nursing career, which started during the Second World War (<http://wp.me/prthD-4RC>).
- Read "As the VA Regroups and Recruits, the Words of Nurses Who Served," by Amanda Anderson, to hear what nurse veterans who've written for or been quoted in *AJN* have to say about their experiences in conflicts through the decades (<http://wp.me/prthD-4Sd>).

WHAT READERS ARE SAYING ON TWITTER, FACEBOOK, AND OUR BLOG

"Nurses' ethics and actions must go hand-in-hand with the patient's will." **"Nurses were and are the backbone of the medical profession."** "I worked many years in the OR and had five children . . . during the polio epidemic. . . I wonder why parents do not want to have their children immunized. Who could take the chance with these little lives? I remember." **"I've had several patients praying that it would just end. They don't want to suffer any longer. And they shouldn't have to."**

JANUARY PODCASTS

- **Monthly highlights:** Listen to *AJN* editors discuss the contents of the January issue. 💡
- **Behind the article:** Editor-in-chief Shawn Kennedy speaks with the author of "Long-Term Outcomes After Repair of Congenital Heart Defects: Part 1." 💡 ▼