



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Nurse at VA Maryland Health Care System Recognized with VA Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing**

**BALTIMORE, MD** – Lawrence Racsa, a VA Maryland Health Care System critical care nurse, has achieved national recognition for being named a recipient of the 2024 VA Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing.

The VA Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing is the highest award for nursing within VA, bestowed annually to top nursing and health care professionals actively engaged in the care of VA patients throughout the nation. Candidates are nominated by their colleagues for outstanding service to veterans and demonstrate excellence and the highest level of dedication to their profession.

“Mr. Racsa has displayed the highest dedication to service excellence” said Remuel John De Guzman, chief nurse in Nursing Education and Research at the VA Maryland Health Care System. “He is truly an asset to our organization and most deserving of national recognition for the positive impact he has on his patients, his colleagues and the nursing profession.”

As a bedside nurse at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, Racsa, who goes by “Enzo,” advocates tirelessly for patients, addressing safety concerns and educating both patients and their families. He also spearheads multiple projects and initiatives focused on enhancing quality care and streamlining unit processes, ultimately leading to better outcomes and improved care for veterans. He has played a crucial role in ensuring the long-term viability of the Early Warning System program—which is saving lives by promoting early recognition and management of

patients showing signs of deterioration in acute inpatient areas—as well as the successful implementation and operation of three other patient-centered projects. Racsa continuously enhances his clinical expertise and performance by participating in programs and professional associations to keep his colleagues informed about the latest evidence-based practices, including conducting epilepsy interdisciplinary training, leading a workgroup tasked with producing a report on the First Five Minutes of Code initiative for VA’s Shark Tank competition, and presenting at the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs annual conference.

Racsa’s interest in nursing was sparked when, as a child, he watched nurses compassionately caring for his hospitalized grandfather, easing his pain and making him smile. Racsa earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing at San Pedro College in the Philippines, where his 20-year career in nursing began until he came to the United States. He joined the VA Maryland Health Care System in June 2020. Prior to that he was a Neurocritical Care nurse at the University of Maryland Medical Center for seven years and was recognized twice as Nurse of the Year during that time. Additional honors Racsa recently received include the regional VA Gold Coin of Excellence, the Nurse Excellence Award by the American Neuroscience Nurses Association, and the Nurse Excellence Award by the Philippine Nurses Association of America.

“I’ve dreamt of being a nurse since I was 6 years old, and I feel honored and humbled to be recognized, and lucky to work with such excellent leaders, mentors, colleagues, and veterans at the Baltimore VA Medical Center,” Racsa said. “I am happy and proud to be a VA nurse and to serve our veterans—they are the real-life heroes.”

As one of six nurses named to this top honor from among more than 119,000 VA nurses, Racsa will be presented his award in person at a ceremony held in Washington, D.C., on May 1 at 10 a.m. The event will be streamed live at <https://site-22609514.bcvp0rtal.com>.

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*The VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) provides a broad spectrum of medical, surgical, rehabilitative, neurological, mental health, primary and long-term care to veterans at three medical center and five outpatient clinics located throughout the state. More than 58,000 veterans from various generations receive their care from the VAMHCS annually. Nationally recognized for its many clinical and research centers of excellence, the VAMHCS is proud of its reputation as a leader in veterans’ health*

*care, research and education. Under the new PACT Act, millions of veterans are now eligible for VA health care. With this recent change, all veterans are encouraged to apply for VA health care by calling 877-222-8387 or by visiting [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT).*