



# PALLIATIVE CARE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2020

## A Message from Dr. R. Sean Morrison

This spring, the COVID-19 Pandemic plunged New Yorkers into what will likely be the greatest humanitarian crisis in our lifetimes. The Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute faced – and overcame – previously unimaginable challenges. Our transdisciplinary team quickly developed, realigned, and redesigned services to continue caring for our seriously ill patients and to deliver care for COVID-19 patients with severe complications. In so doing, we increased access to high quality palliative care across the Mount Sinai Health System, New York City, and the United States.

To keep seriously ill patients safely away from the hospital, the Hertzberg Institute immediately transitioned our regular ambulatory visits to telehealth and expanded access to our Mount Sinai at Home program, which delivers hospital-level and subacute care to patients' homes. We also swiftly educated colleagues, residents, and medical students in primary palliative care skills to increase our reach in the health system's Emergency Rooms and Intensive Care Units. Over the past few months, our team helped, healed, and saved thousands of seriously ill patients.

As leaders in the field of palliative care and the first American health system to confront a surge of COVID-19 cases, we recognized the responsibility to share our experience with institutions across the country. In partnership with the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) at Mount Sinai, we created a free COVID-19 Response Resource



*R. Sean Morrison, MD with the Mount Sinai Queens Multidisciplinary Palliative Care Team*

toolkit for all clinicians. CAPC has shared our Institute's innovations with the American Hospital Association and developed case studies so that other intuitions can respond immediately.

Philanthropy has long been a cornerstone of our Institute and has allowed us to build the most robust palliative care program in the country. We will be relying on it once again. The Hertzberg Institute can expect to care for COVID-19 patients until the virus is eradicated. Our patients are considerably more likely to experience adverse outcomes from COVID-19 and COVID-19 can cause new serious illness. With this, the costs associated with increased staffing, essential equipment, and training for our colleagues throughout the health system will continue to grow. If you are moved to donate to our work, please visit: <http://giving.mountsinai.org/hertzberg>.

I wish you continued wellbeing and look forward to sharing brighter days ahead!

Sincerely,

*R. Sean Morrison, MD*

*Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair,  
Brookdale Department of  
Geriatrics and Palliative  
Medicine*



## *The Hertzberg Institute Rapidly Expands Palliative Care Access in Response to COVID-19 Surge*



*John Fiddler, NP reunites COVID-19 patients with families through video calls when visitors are limited*



*Rev. Dr. Rachelle Zazzu prays at the door of a COVID-19 patient as requested by the family*

As thousands of people sickened by COVID-19 flooded New York City's health systems, the Hertzberg Institute rapidly restructured its services for persons and families dealing with serious illness.

Palliative care clinicians are experts in symptom management, eliciting goals of care and supporting families with difficult healthcare decisions, and in sharing skills with peers. Our transdisciplinary team deployed this expertise to care for seriously ill COVID and non-COVID patients throughout the system. In a multi-pronged approach, the Institute deployed clinicians to every Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit in the Health System, trained colleagues to deliver quality palliative care, and established a 24/7 Palliative Care Telephonic Help Line.

Hertzberg's physicians and fellows were dispatched throughout Mount Sinai Health System Hospitals to alleviate the patient volumes in emergency settings. By tending to patients who needed symptom management and goals of care discussion, the Emergency and ICU Physicians were allowed to focus on

more urgent medical needs. Thus, saving countless lives throughout New York City during the surge.

Over the course of a few days in March, the Institute developed and launched a 24-hour physician-staffed telephonic hot line (PATCH-24). In addition to Hertzberg's physicians, this line was staffed by specially-trained volunteers including palliative care physicians from across the county. The Institute also trained ophthalmology, dentistry, and dermatology residents, and medical students to provide basic primary care and triage.

Dr. Emily Chai, Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute said: "Every day over the past few weeks, I have watched our teams throughout the health system innovate new solutions to situations and problems that we could never have envisioned. Programs that normally would have taken months to plan and create were rolled out in days. This creativity, innovation, and commitment allows us to reach the seemingly overwhelming numbers of patients, families, and clinicians that need our care." ■

# PALLIATIVE CARE AT HOME

As part of its rapid response to COVID-19, the Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute expanded its Palliative Care at Home, which keeps seriously ill patients and families out of the hospital. Palliative Care at Home began as a research study in 2018 and demonstrated initial success including increased patient and family satisfaction and improved symptom management. The program was quickly scaled to meet the overwhelming need for care outside the hospital setting.

Since the spring, all seriously ill New York City residents who present to Emergency Departments throughout the Mount Sinai Health System have been offered at-home services to avoid hospitalization. Many patients have also been enrolled directly from home, thus completely avoiding a trip to the hospital. Patients enrolled in Palliative Care at Home receive the support of a nurse, social worker, and community health worker to manage symptoms and other challenges of serious illness, including aligning goals of care with appropriate medical treatment. Care is provided by video or telephone visits and medications are delivered to the patients' home.

Palliative Care at Home joins the suite of Mount Sinai at Home services which also houses our Hospitalization at Home and Visiting Doctors. The services vary in degree of the patients' severity of illness and age. However, all bring care to the patient in a setting most comfortable to them.

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the patient's prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment. ■

## New Hertzberg Institute Advisory Board Members: Jeannie Blaustein, PhD, DMin and Daniel Rube

The Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute Advisory Board Members serve as advocates and ambassadors expanding the reach and awareness of palliative care.



**Jeannie P. Blaustein, PhD, D.Min** has spent her professional career as a therapist, pastoral counselor, and community leader. Over the last 15 years, her work has gravitated toward the field of end of life and advance care planning. Dr. Blaustein is the founding board chair of Reimagine End of Life, a non-profit that aims to break down taboos around illness, caregiving, dying, and grief so that we may all live fully through the end. She is an adjunct professor at Pace University and holds doctorates in clinical psychology and pastoral care. Dr. Blaustein completed INELDA's End of Life first doula course, studied clinical pastoral education at JTS, and worked as a chaplain intern on the Wiener Family Palliative Care Unit. She currently sits on the boards of Reimagine End of Life, Auburn Theological Seminary, Jonas Nursing and Veterans, and The Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation.

## NEW LEADERSHIP BODES WELL DURING PANDEMIC



### *Introducing Tremayne Cunningham, MS Vice-Chair of Administration and Finance*

Ms. Tremayne Cunningham, a more than 20-year veteran of the Mount Sinai Health System, joined the Brookdale Department last summer to lead its administrative and financial operations. Within her first year in the role, she faced an unimaginable challenge: leading the Department, whose patients are at highest risk, through a global pandemic.

In partnership with Chair Dr. R. Sean Morrison, Ms. Cunningham leveraged her considerable expertise and demonstrated incredible leadership as the clinical and administrative teams responded to rapidly shifting needs and great uncertainty.

“When we recruited Tremayne last year, we expected that she would make considerable improvements

to our program. What we did not expect was a crisis of COVID’s magnitude and how proficiently she led our teams. Tremayne’s partnership will undoubtedly ensure that our department continues to advance healthcare for all older adults, persons with serious illness, and their loved ones,” said Dr. Morrison, Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine.

Before she joined the Brookdale Department, Ms. Cunningham served as Director of Operations in both the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Neurology. She is well-versed in the needs of vulnerable patients and their caregivers. In her previous roles, Ms. Cunningham was successful in improving patient access and satisfaction, clinical workflow, and strategic planning.



**Daniel Rube** is the Executive Vice President and Deputy General Counsel of the National Basketball Association (NBA), where he has worked since 1995. His principal responsibilities include collective bargaining with the National Basketball Players Association, oversight of the NBA’s salary cap

system, work on finance- and competition-related matters, counseling teams on compliance with the league rules, and the formulation and implementation of league revenue-sharing policies. Mr. Rube received his B.A. from Amherst College and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Mr. Rube joins the Hertzberg Institute’s Advisory Board following experiences in tending to loved ones without the essential support that palliative care provides. He believes in the Institute’s mission of helping healthcare institutions improve quality of life through more informed, coordinated, and empathetic care provided to individuals and families facing the challenge of serious illness. ■

### Hertzberg Institute Advisory Board Members

Saskia Siderow, *Co-Chair*  
Susie West, *Co-Chair*  
Deborah Berg  
Jeannie Blaustein, PhD  
Beth Dannhauser  
Peggy Danziger  
Joseph Hertzberg  
Lois Perelson-Gross  
Meryl Rosofsky, MD  
Daniel Rube  
Stephen Siderow  
Jenny Steingart  
Zena Wiener

# The American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine Welcomes President-Elect, Dr. Nathan Goldstein



Dr. Nathan Goldstein, Site Chair for Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at Mount Sinai Downtown, was elected as President of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM) in November. AAHPM is the professional organization for multidisciplinary clinicians specializing in palliative medicine. The academy's core mission is to expand access of high-quality palliative care to patients and families, and to advance the field through professional education and training, support for clinical practice standards, research, and public policy.

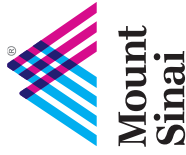
"I am deeply honored to have been elected President of AAHPM. The Academy is one of the leading organizations responsible for shaping the future of palliative care," said Dr. Goldstein, who will serve as President of the Academy for the 2021-2022 term. "Goals for my presidency include: continuing to promote standards for quality palliative care across the country; assuring that we have a voice

in the ongoing discussions of healthcare reform; and continuing to strengthen the research base for our field."

Dr. Goldstein received his medical school, internship, and residency training at Mount Sinai. He joined a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program at Yale (2001-2003), and returned to Mount Sinai for his Geriatrics Fellowship. Since then, he has assumed many positions within The Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, including: Director of the Integrated Fellowship (2007-2009), Hertzberg Institute Director of Research and Quality (2010-2017), and Mount Sinai Beth Israel Chief of Palliative Care (2015-2017).

In addition to his commitment to Mount Sinai, he has held many significant positions within the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, including: Research Committee Member (2006-2008), Chair of the Assembly Scientific Subcommittee (2008), Board Member (2013-2019), and most recently, Secretary of the Board (2018-2019).

Dr. R. Sean Morrison, Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine and Past President of AAHPM (2010-2011) said: "I cannot think of a better person to carry forward this mission and I commend AAHPM on their election of Dr. Goldstein. I am assured that with his extensive knowledge and experience, Dr. Goldstein will be an irrefutable success and an asset to the Academy." ■



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*“To cure sometimes,  
to relieve often, to  
comfort always”*

Fourth-Century French Proverb