

DOULA PROGRAM EXPANDS to Serve Palliative Care Unit Patients

Walk into a patient room at the Wiener Family Palliative Care Unit (PCU) and you're likely to see a volunteer companion, known as a doula, paying a visit. Doulas have been providing companionship and comfort to palliative care patients at Mount Sinai since 2008, when the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute partnered with the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Inc. (JBFC) Doula to Accompany and Comfort program.

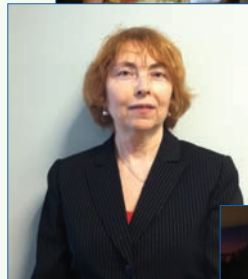
In 2011, the Hertzberg Institute received a grant from the JBFC to develop its own doula program and train additional doulas to volunteer on the PCU. "People with serious illnesses need extra attention from someone who doesn't wear a white coat. Doulas help patients feel less isolated during their hospitalization, support patients without close family members nearby, and help family members cope with the stress of having a seriously ill relative," says Marianne Gelber, MSN, GNP, ACHPN, Clinical Coordinator who facilitates the doula program with Chaplain Rabbi Edith Meyerson.

This January, 12 volunteers completed the first doula training session offered at Mount Sinai. Twenty doulas now volunteer on the PCU. The doulas are a diverse group, including full-time professionals from fields such as law and publishing, as well as Mount Sinai medical students and employees. "Our doulas are patient, compassionate people who adapt to the needs of the patient and family," says Gelber.

Ann Lieb, an attorney from Brooklyn, began volunteering on the PCU soon after it opened. She has spent time with patients of various ages and backgrounds, listening to music, reading, talking or simply holding a hand. "I find that my spiritual life is deeper and richer from my expe-



Fran Whelan and Marianne Gelber, MSN, GNP, ACHPN



Ann Lieb



Rabbi Edith Meyerson

riences. My life has been touched by every single person I've met. Everything I witness is sacred," says Lieb.

Fran Whelan, a nurse and social worker from Manhattan, has been a massage therapy volunteer for Mount Sinai palliative care patients for seven years. This year, she became a doula. "It's such a privilege to be with patients and families who are looking at what's important in their lives and searching for meaning," says Whelan. ■

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PALLIATIVE CARE NEWSLETTER
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THE
**LILIAN AND BENJAMIN HERTZBERG
PALLIATIVE CARE INSTITUTE**



PALLIATIVE CARE NEWSLETTER

SUPPORTIVE ONCOLOGY PROGRAM INTEGRATES PALLIATIVE CARE AND CANCER TREATMENT

This March, the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute together with the Ruttenberg Treatment Center, which provides outpatient cancer treatment, launched the Supportive Oncology Program to integrate palliative care into outpatient cancer therapy. For the first time, cancer patients receiving treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation, can see a palliative medicine practitioner right at the Treatment Center. "With so many Mount Sinai patients receiving cancer treatment, the Ruttenberg Center is a natural place to provide palliative care to relieve the physical pain and emotional stress of cancer," says Emily Chai, MD, Associate Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute.



Bethann Scarborough, MD

Providing palliative care during cancer treatment can make a significant difference for patients. In a landmark 2010 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, patients with newly diagnosed advanced lung cancer who received palliative care in addition to standard cancer treatment had better quality of life, experienced less depression and lived longer than their counterparts who received only standard cancer treatment.

Palliative care is available to patients with any type of cancer, regardless of their prognosis. "Patients do not need to be "terminal" or "end-stage" to receive or benefit from

palliative care. Our goals are always the same whatever the patient's condition: to alleviate spiritual, physical and emotional suffering," says Bethann Scarborough, MD, a recent Hertzberg fellow who joined the faculty in February.

Dr. Scarborough is a member of the Ruttenberg Center's teams of oncologists, social workers, nurse practitioners/physician assistants and nurses who address the unique needs of cancer patients. Palliative care can relieve common treatment side effects, such as fatigue and neuropathy (nerve pain), which can interfere with everyday functioning. It also can address emotional issues, such as the loss of identity that can come from not being able to work full-time or be physically active. "We provide a safe haven for patients and their families to express emotions and discuss issues they are dealing with," says Dr. Scarborough.

As the program develops, it will expand to include additional palliative medicine providers to ensure the highest quality palliative care to cancer patients. ■

NEWS FROM THE WIENER FAMILY PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT

Introducing Maureen Leahy, Clinical Nurse Manager

Last October, the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute welcomed Maureen Leahy, RN, BSN, MHA, CHPN, to the Palliative Care Unit (PCU) as the first Clinical Nurse Manager. Leahy previously served as Nurse Manager at Tidewell Hospice in Port Charlotte, Florida, and helped establish a palliative care program for the Lee Memorial Healthcare System in Fort Myers.

As Clinical Nurse Manager, Leahy oversees nursing care and supervises the nursing staff on the PCU. She is helping to educate Mount

Sinai nurses about palliative care through her participation in Mount Sinai nurse training and mentoring programs. “Palliative care’s holistic approach is fundamental to good nursing,” says Leahy, who sees her role as “teacher, helper, manager and role model. Palliative care is a challenging kind of nursing care; I’ve loved getting to know the PCU nursing staff and learning how I can help them to be better nurses.” Her goal is to have all PCU nurses become certified by the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses.

“We couldn’t have found a more perfect person for the position,” says Gabrielle Goldberg, MD, Medical Director of the PCU. “In addition to her knowledge and experience, Maureen brings warmth and caring to her leadership role.”

PCU Offers Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice Care

Patients on the Palliative Care Unit who are close to the end of life can now receive additional support from the Visiting Nurse

Service of New York (VNSNY) Hospice Care. Mount Sinai Hospital has contracted with VNSNY to provide hospice services, and with that our patients can receive additional visits from hospice nurses, social workers and chaplains. Family members can also receive 13 months of bereavement support.

Music and Creative Writing Therapists Join Art Therapy Program

Beginning in April, Music Therapist Todd O’Connor and Creative Writing Specialist Thomas Dooley joined Art Therapist Sarah Yazdian in offering new creative outlets for PCU patients and their families. Since 2011, Yazdian has worked with patients and family members to create art that helps them express emotions and reflect on their situation. “By providing a variety of healing modalities, we can give people more opportunities to find creative expression,” says Yazdian.

Diane Rode, Director of the Creative Arts Therapy Department at Mount Sinai Kravis Children’s Hospital, secured donor funding for the new therapists, as she did for Yazdian.

PCU patient artwork



Sarah Yazdian, R. Sean Morrison, MD, Maureen Leahy, RN, and the PCU Nursing Staff

Meet Lilly: the Palliative Care Unit’s Therapy Dog

The Palliative Care Unit has a new therapy dog, Lilly, an Australian Labradoodle. Lilly and her owner, Ruth Gutstein, visit the PCU regularly, lifting the spirits of patients, families, and staff members. “Patients who’ve left a dog behind are the most excited to see Lilly. She loves to be petted and brings a smile to everyone she meets,” says Gutstein.



Mount Sinai Awarded Advanced Certification for Palliative Care

Last year, Mount Sinai Medical Center became one of the first five hospitals in the nation to receive Advanced Certification for Palliative Care from The Joint Commission (TJC), the organization that accredits hospitals. This certification affirms that the Hertzberg Institute for Palliative Care meets established quality guidelines and provides exceptional patient- and family-centered care. “Certification is particularly important for a new specialty like palliative care. As a leader in palliative care, we wanted to set an example for other programs by undergoing a formal recognition process by an outside agency,” says R. Sean Morrison, MD, Director of the Hertzberg Institute for Palliative Care.

The certification process is a rigorous one, requiring programs to document compliance with the following key areas:

- **Program management** – including all policies and procedures
- **Provision of care, treatment and services** – including care coordination and communication among

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palliative care practitioners and hospital staff

- **Access to palliative care** for all patients and families who need it
- **Palliative care education and training** for hospital staff members
- **Performance measurement and quality improvement**

“Preparing for certification gave us an opportunity to take a global view of our program and reflect on our strengths and identify areas we could improve. It strengthened our team to work together on this project,” says Jay Horton, ACHPN, FNP-BC, MPH, Director of the Palliative Care Consultation Service within Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute.

When the TJC reviewer visited Mount Sinai, she was presented with four binders of documents and a list of colleagues from various Mount Sinai departments who were eager to speak on behalf of the Institute’s services. Mount Sinai was one of only two hospitals to achieve a perfect score on its survey with no citations. “The reviewer commented she had never observed a team that functioned as seamlessly and effectively as our group,” says Dr. Morrison.

Being certified benefits the Institute and the people it serves. “It assures patients and families that they will receive the highest quality care and acknowledges our leadership in palliative care,” says Dr. Morrison. ■