Providing Patient and Family Centered Care

Every day, we provide patients with comprehensive palliative treatment to relieve physical and emotional suffering, at the same time they are receiving effective medical treatments. Once uncomfortable symptoms are fully addressed, our specialists meet with patients and their families to discuss their goals for treatment. We consider the nature of the disease process as well as each individual’s personal values and priorities. Our services are delivered in close collaboration with other treating physicians and the entire health care team. All share the common goal of providing effective treatment along with compassion, support and comfort to each patient and family member.

Our Mission

We strive to provide the highest quality patient-and-family centered care for seriously ill patients through excellent clinical consultation, comprehensive educational programs, innovative research and ongoing performance improvement.

Family Members’ Comments

“All staff was very caring and attentive. Guidance is especially appreciated during difficult times, and this program covered all our needs.”

“We were unaware of the existence of this at the hospital. It gave us a wonderful opportunity to spend time with mom and a great sense of comfort for all the family.”

“No words can express how our mother and family were treated. We will tell all we meet how palliative care is the most rewarding experience we have had.”

“100% quality team!”
Our Reach is Growing

The clinical, educational and research activities of the University of Rochester Medical Center's Palliative Care Program continue to grow and expand. During 2013-14, we provided over 1,350 new inpatient consults, and our daily census on the inpatient service averaged between 25-30 patients. We also saw 347 new patients in the outpatient clinics during the past year, as we have expanded the number of outpatient clinicians and clinic days.

This year we will be expanding the reach of our inpatient consultations to include F.F. Thompson Hospital, and our outpatient consultation service will include all of the Interlakes Oncology sites as well as the Pluta Cancer Center. We similarly have a growing Pediatric Palliative Care Program which provided over 205 inpatient consults last year and care for 40 outpatients. Our Perinatal program, started in January of 2012, has provided consults to over 100 pregnant women with potentially serious fetal diagnoses.

Facts and Figures About Our Program

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Quality of Care

In the Fall of 2011, our program was the first academic medical center in the United States to attain Certification in Advanced Palliative Care by The Joint Commission. We were re-certified in October of 2013, to include our pediatric program alongside our adult program. In addition to meeting a broad range of clinical, academic and administrative standards, our program is working on four unique quality measures that address the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of care:

- Document pain every two hours among hospice inpatients
- Check for spiritual care needs
- Survey inpatient adults for depression
- Screen for depression among hospitalized children and their parents

We also have monthly quality improvement team meetings on our 4-1200 palliative care unit where we regularly take on new projects in an effort to have our quality continue to evolve to the highest possible level.
Education and Research

We continue to provide the required palliative care educational experience to all our undergraduate medical students and residents in internal medicine and combined medicine-pediatrics. Our palliative care fellowship program has three full-time positions. Our previous fellows have joined our programs and others across the country as palliative care faculty.

Palliative care has been granted subspecialty status from the American Board of Medical Specialties, and our program is proud to be in the first cohort of formally ACGME accredited fellowship programs. The field of Palliative Care is growing rapidly, as is the demand for fellowship-trained clinicians. Our ability to provide this training is an invaluable component of the national movement to expand palliative care services.

Several members of our faculty authored the Primer of Palliative Care, recently released in its 6th edition. We are striving to train all clinicians to provide basic palliative care as part of what high-quality health care should look like, potentially reserving specialist palliative care for the more challenging and difficult clinical problems. The latest version of the Primer now includes detailed information about pediatric palliative care.

We also have active research teams who are currently studying the key elements of palliative care conversations between clinicians, patients and families. They are also studying the effectiveness of newly implemented palliative care teams in nursing home settings.

Leading the Way

Timothy E. Quill, MD, an internationally recognized pioneer in palliative care and end-of-life decision making, was named one of the 30 most influential leaders in hospice and palliative medicine.

“It is a great honor for me to be included in this list of influential leaders in our field,” said Quill. “The work of palliative care and hospice both locally and nationally involves a large cadre of dedicated, extremely skilled professionals from a wide range of fields who team up together to serve the needs of our most seriously ill patients and their families. It is a great privilege for me to serve such patients and their families, and to work with such a dedicated team of professionals all of whom deserve to be recognized.”

Dr. Quill is past president of American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and a regular contributor to respected publications such as the Journal of the American Medical Association and the New England Journal of Medicine. He has written several books on end-of-life issues, including the newly released Palliative Care and Ethics by Oxford University Press, 2014.

Sussman Palliative Care 4-1200 Unit

In 2009 Strong Memorial Hospital opened the region’s only hospital-based palliative care unit. Our Palliative Care Unit continues to be committed to providing exceptional palliative care to patients and their families alongside all other indicated medical treatments.

The Sussman Unit also offers a variety of therapeutic activities for the benefit of our patients and their families such as:

- Afternoon Family Tea held daily made possible by the donations of the Harary Family
- Family Lounge offers families snacks and coffee, kitchen facilities, as well as use of a computer, etc.
- Children’s Resource area where children will find books and other resource materials
- Bedside harp music and massage enjoyed by a number of our patients and their families.
This past year we were fortunate to have very strong philanthropic support. Listed below are some of our donors whom we would like to recognize and thank for their generosity.

- Clare E. and Jerald J. Rotenberg Endowment
- Sussman Family Education Endowment
- The Fraser-Parker Foundation – grant support for our Music, Massage and Bereavement programs as well as our Fellowship program
- Betty Strasenburgh - support for our bedside harp music program
- Betty Van De Mortel - naming the 4-1200 conference room
- Keith and Kathy Kurz - naming the 4-1200 Nurse Manager/Leader office and staff break room
- Jane Levin - unrestricted support of our program
- Farash Foundation
- Wolk Foundation
- The Friends of Strong

For those interested in learning more about providing philanthropic support to the Palliative Care Program, please contact Jodi Revill, Senior Director of Advancement at 585-276-4978 or jrevill@ur.rochester.edu.

Our Interdisciplinary Team

Our team continues to grow and thrive. It now includes thirteen outstanding physicians and four excellent full-time nurse practitioners, all of whom are board certified in hospice and palliative medicine. In addition, we have three full-time palliative care fellows each year.

On the pediatric service, we have three physicians and a part-time nurse practitioner to serve the special palliative care needs of infants, children and adolescents.

Our interdisciplinary team includes nursing, social work, ethics, chaplaincy, pharmacy, massage therapy, live harp music and bereavement follow-up support.