

Life Quality Institute: Advancing Palliative Care

*"Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire."*

~ William Butler Yeats ~

The Life Quality Institute, dedicated to advancing palliative care through education, is honored to be the recipient of the 2007 Community Education Award presented by the Denver Medical Society.

To successfully introduce and incorporate palliative care into the medical system and culture, education is critical. Until recently, formal education in palliative and end-of-life care has been largely absent from medical school, health professions, and residency training. Studies show that students, residents, and practicing professionals feel unprepared, often fearful, to care for patients with incurable diseases. This lack of training in end-of-life care leads to untreated pain, ineffective communication, and deaths devoid of compassion and dignity.

In 2003, The Denver Hospice created the Life Quality Institute to address this critical education gap. Through professional and community education, the Life Quality Institute is committed to creating systems that ensure that palliative care education and training becomes deeply imbedded into healthcare standards and practices, and prepares tomorrow's physicians to provide better care for our aging society. Since inception, the Life Quality Institute has provided more than 80,000 hours of experiential, palliative care education to medical students, residents, physician assistant students, physicians, healthcare professionals, and the public.

Under the direction of Daniel Johnson, M.D., a nationally recognized palliative care physician-educator, the Life Quality Institute has developed award-winning education and training programs for students, residents, and other interdisciplinary health professionals. Each year, more than 750 medical, nursing, and physician assistant students experience a minimum one-day hospice rotation.

Life Quality Institute's premiere program for medical and nursing students

requires each student to spend a day with a preceptor from one of the local hospices. Following a morning didactic session on palliative care, each student shadows a preceptor to observe the role of the interdisciplinary team member. While observing patient communications and interactions, students are encouraged to explore the meaning of hope in individuals nearing life's end. Students end the day in a debriefing session where they can review the experience with a physician or nurse. While results from student pre- and post-tests are impressive (averaging a 38% increase), one student's comment clearly summarizes the success of Life Quality Institute programs:

This experience will remind me to keep my "third ear" open and really hear what my patients are telling me about themselves as well as their illnesses.

Daniel Johnson's leadership in palliative care education has helped fuel interest in the healthcare community. Physicians throughout Colorado are exploring palliative care issues through Life Quality Institute interactive programs including:

- *Managing Common and Distressing Symptoms in Advanced Illness*
- *Using Opioids in Complex Illness: Ten Common Mistakes*
- *Derailing the 'Do Everything' Directive: Negotiating Code Status in End-Stage Illness*
- *Drawing Lines in End-of-Life Care: Ethical Principles and Colorado Law*
- *Stopping the Revolving Door: Strategies to Break the Cycle of Readmissions in End-Stage Illness*

These programs are specifically tailored to the needs and concerns of the
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Palliative Care is . . .

interdisciplinary, team-based care that aims to relieve suffering and support best quality of life for patients living with advanced illness. This supportive care, most often delivered concurrently with traditional medical therapies, addresses the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of patients and families.

Palliative care:

- provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms including the physical, emotional and spiritual pain
- affirms life and regards dying as a normal process
- neither hastens nor postpones death
- integrates, equally, the psychological and spiritual aspects of care
- offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible
- offers a support system to help the family journey with the patient through the illness
- engages a team comprised of a physician, nurse, chaplain, and social worker, to address the needs of patients and their families
- enhances quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness

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physician group and include case studies, role play, and interactive discussions. Physicians attending these educational programs praise the content and quality of the offerings:

- *Knowledgeable professionals who presented all the information in a useful and practical format.*
- *Effective presentation of material . . . a well thought out introduction.*
- *A valuable program because information was based on evidence.*

In the next five years, data show that retiring Baby Boomers will place additional strain on the healthcare system. Most of these persons will struggle with chronic and debilitating diseases like cancer, congestive heart failure, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease. At a time when our healthcare systems are stressed, new approaches are needed for those caring for friends and family members with advanced or terminal illness. Strengthening caregiving systems, formal and informal, should be a foundational component in all palliative care programs.

Under the guidance of Jane Barton, M.T.S., the Life Quality Institute has established *Creating Communities of Care*, a community-based educational program that supports the development of networks of practical care for patients and their caregivers. *Creating Communities of Care* promotes the Share The Care™ model of caregiving. This model is designed to help family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and volunteers unite to create a community of care...a community offering time and talents to meet the diverse and varied needs of the patient and their family. By creating communities of care, the likelihood of the primary caregiver succumbing to serious illness is reduced while the quality of life for the patient and family is enhanced. Keenan Moore, a social worker, provides the simplest description of this caregiving model.

This [program] seems so basic- so intuitive, but it feels like this truly is an answer, or a source of hope for those feeling overwhelmed by the stress, burdens, obligations and needs of caregiving and receiving care.

The Life Quality Institute is committed to supporting the best quality of life for individuals with advanced illness and their families by educating healthcare profes-

sionals, students and communities about palliative care and supporting the growth and development of palliative care clinical services. Quality of life is dependant on hope. H. Brody wrote (JAMA 1981):

Hope means different things to different people, and different things to the same person as he/she moves through stages of illness. When we talk to patients and find out what is really worrying them, we can almost always give them realistic assurances."

Understanding the hope of patients with advanced illnesses and their families is a key ingredient of good palliative care. The programs and experiences provided by Life Quality Institute serve as tools that challenge learners to recognize hope and explore the potential of palliative care to change the culture of medical care.

Today taught me how just being there can make such a difference to our patients and how all hope is not lost." ~ Third-year medical student ~

Community collaborations are key to the future of palliative care in Colorado and throughout the nation. Community foundations, local corporations and individuals have generously supported the Life Quality Institute. Equally important, local hospices, universities, churches, and civic organizations have provided time, talent, and leadership to further the success of palliative care education and the Life Quality Institute. Life Quality Institute is proud to be an integral part of this critical movement in our healthcare system.

If interested, your physician group or healthcare organization can arrange for a tailored palliative care education program by contacting Daniel Johnson, M.D., at Daniel.Johnson@kp.org. For more information about community programs for your church or social organizations, please call Jane Barton at 303-398-6230. For general information about Life Quality Institute or to make a donation to further palliative care education in Colorado, please call Cheryl Siefert at 303-780-4676.

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