The Coalition for Quality at the End of Life (CQEL), a regional coalition of leading health systems, providers, insurers, citizen groups, governmental agencies, and philanthropic, faith-based, and professional organizations concerned about the quality of care available to seriously ill and dying people and their families, invited Dr. Richard Payne to Pittsburgh as a consultant on March 19 and 20, 2007. Dr. Payne is Duke University’s Director of the Institute on Care at the End of Life and an internationally known expert in pain relief, palliative care, oncology, and neurology, who is a pioneer in overcoming disparities in palliative care. He delivered a public lecture, attended a special CQEL meeting, and participated in a working lunch held by CQEL’s Committee on Engagement of Underserved Communities. It was a very informative and productive two days. CQEL members and the health care community are looking forward to working with Dr. Payne and the Institute on Care at the End of Life in the future on issues of disparities in palliative and end-of-life care.

"Living and Dying in Black and White: What Do We Really Know, and What Can We Do?"

March 2007, CQEL, University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Minority Health, and UPMC Cancer Centers sponsored Dr. Richard Payne’s public lecture, "Living and Dying in Black and White: What Do We Really Know, and What Can We Do?" Over 100 attended at the UPMC Shadyside site. It was also attended via teleconference at the following locations:

- Hospice of Lancaster County
- UPMC Passavant Hospital
- UPMC Northwest Hospital
- UPMC McKeesport Hospital
- Arnold Palmer Pavilion, UPMC Cancer Center, Latrobe
- Uniontown Hospital

Dr. Payne’s lecture focused on health care disparities for African Americans and how these disparities throughout the life span ultimately impact the care received near the end of life in African American communities. In addition, he discussed several initiatives that have been undertaken to try to better understand as well as address these disparities.

Photos from his visit and a link to Dr. Payne’s PowerPoint presentation: "Living and Dying in Black and White: What Do We Really Know, and What Can We Do?" is available on the Institute website http://www.dgim.pitt.edu/iepc/eol_care.html

Allegheny County Nursing Schools Come Together to Discuss Palliative and End-of-Life Curricula

On April 16, faculty and administrators from the five nursing schools in Allegheny County with baccalaureate programs came together to discuss the state of palliative and end-of-life care content in their respective curricula. The five schools included Carlow University, Duquesne University, LaRoche College, Robert Morris University, and the University of Pittsburgh.

Throughout our lives, nurses are the compassionate face of the health system—touching, listening, and healing. The nurse unites technical skill with compassion. While applying the tools and techniques of advanced medical science, the nurse is equally committed to entering empathically into the life of the sick person, addressing not only the physical aspects of disease, but also the sufferings of illness.

Perhaps more than any other area of medicine, palliative care—which serves the needs of the critically ill and the dying—requires the practitioner to combine technical skill with empathy. Palliative care is supportive care that works to alleviate pain and symptoms in order to maintain the best possible quality of life for people, whose lives technology has extended, and for their families.

It is no accident that nursing has been the profession at the forefront since the beginning of the palliative care movement. At a time when our rapidly aging population is increasing its need for palliative care, it is urgent that we have a reliable workforce of appropriately trained nurses to deliver it.

Ultimately, participants from the meeting are investigating possibilities for conducting a coordinated needs assessment to inform curricular reform. A follow-up meeting to think about ways to further examine this aspect of the undergraduate curriculum at their institutions is being planned for later in the summer.