APPEAL Training Conference Attracts Health Care Workers from the Region and Beyond

The Institute, as a part of the Coalition for Quality at the End of Life’s (CQEL) Compassionate Care for All Campaign, in cooperation with Duke University’s Institute on Care at the End of Life, presented the APPEAL (A Progressive Palliative Care Educational Curriculum for the Care of African Americans at Life’s End) Training Conference on April 18-19 at the Herberman Conference Center. The conference was a success on all fronts with over 100 people in attendance. Attendees came from all over the region and as far away as Philadelphia, Washington DC, and towns in Ohio and Georgia.

A diverse group of faculty brought their experience and knowledge to the curriculum including members from Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, and Durham and Greensboro, NC. Local faculty members included UPMC General Internist and founder of the University of Pittsburgh’s HIV Center, Dr. Susan Hunt and Dean of Students at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Rev. John C. Welch.

As part of the conference, the Open Stage Theatre Company performed a staged reading of the play Vesta, a play by Bryan Harnetiaux, which offers a warm and, in this case, funny exploration of a family’s struggle with a variety of end-of-life issues as they come to terms with the eventual loss of their matriarch. The Institute and CQEL are in the process of planning additional productions of this remarkable performance for the wider community.

LHAS Awards Funding to the Institute on Behalf of CQEL for Additional Vesta Performances

The IEPC on behalf of CQEL received a grant from the Ladies Hospital Aid Society (LHAS) of approximately $8,000 to support two more productions of the play Vesta in the community. LHAS supports people in need of health care and related services, distributing funds to organizations and individuals every year. Vesta is a 90-minute drama that can be used by hospices, churches, divinity schools, medical schools and other organizations as an educational tool and as a vehicle for creating public dialogue about end-of-life issues. Its first local performance presented by local theatre company Open Stage garnered tremendous response as part of the APPEAL Training Conference. Audience talk-back sessions after the performance provide opportunities for discussing advance care planning, hospice and care giving issues.

The Open Stage Theatre is a small theatre company located in the Strip District that produces challenging plays intended to provide unique opportunities for artists and audiences to actively engage with one another. The Open Stage Theatre is committed to putting on the additional productions with CQEL, so look for announcements in the coming months!

The Institute Announces the Evelyn Amdur Palliative Care Social Work Fellowship Award for 2008

Jeongim Grace Heo is the recipient of the 2008 Evelyn Amdur Palliative Care Social Work Fellowship. Grace received her BA and MED in counseling and psychology from Pusan National University in South Korea. She then went on to earn an MSW in Gerontology from the University of Huston. She is currently a doctoral student in the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh under Professor Gary Koeske. She is especially interested in religiosity and caregiving burdens among caregivers of Alzheimer patients and hopes to develop her practice skills through the fellowship.

Social workers, with their expertise in the psychological and social aspects of illness, family dynamics, and community resources, are critical members of the palliative care team. The Amdur Palliative Care Social Work Fellowship provides an intensive, one-month internship in palliative care social work for University of Pittsburgh social work students under the guidance of one of the nation’s leading academic palliative care programs. Charlene Amato, BCD, LCSW, a Palliative Care Social Worker at UPMC Presbyterian has served as mentor for Amdur Fellowship program since 2004.