The Institute Welcomes Anna Oberacker, Graduate Student Researcher from the Graduate School of Public Health to its 2008-09 Staff

The Institute is pleased to welcome Anna Oberacker, Graduate Student Researcher from the Graduate School of Public Health to its staff. Anna is in her last year as a Health Policy and Management degree and is looking forward to a fellowship with John Hopkins and her future career in health systems administration. Anna is originally from Erie, PA and received her undergraduate degree from Duquesne University. This year, she is lending her expertise to Institute projects including program planning and implementation for the Coalition for Quality at the End of Life’s Compassionate Care for All Campaign, a needs assessment and training development for health plan care managers, best practice research, and resource and content development for an upcoming website for the public.

Pittsburgh Community Members Experience Vesta, a Dramatic Portrayal of Aging and End-of-life Issues Courtesy of CQEL’s Compassionate Care for All Campaign and Ladies Hospital Aid Society Support

More than 80 community members, including students of the University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Public Health, came together at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary on Saturday November 22, 2008 to see actors from Pittsburgh’s Open Stage Theatre perform a staged reading of Vesta and discuss the issues it raised. This play by Brian Harnetiaux tells the story of a 75-year-old woman coping with her declining health and independence. She and her family work through financial, emotional, social, and existential issues related to her illness and death and dying. By telling Vesta’s story through humor and heartfelt emotion, the play raises the visibility of end-of-life issues and starts an important conversation about an often unsettling topic.

This powerful drama of aging, love, and loss was presented in celebration of November as National Hospice and Palliative Care Month as part of the Coalition for Quality at the End of Life’s Compassionate Care for All Campaign in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Minority Health’s Healthy Black Families Project and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The production was made possible with the generous support of the Ladies Hospital Aid Society and additional support from the sponsors of the Compassionate Care for All Campaign including the Fine Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Presbyterian Senior Care, the Take Charge of Your Life Partnership. UPMC Health Plan, University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, and the W.I. Patterson Charitable Trust.

The University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences, in collaboration with Family Hospice and Palliative Care, established the Institute to Enhance Palliative Care in 2003 to improve access to and quality of palliative care in Western Pennsylvania. The Institute’s mission is to educate health care providers, conduct research, raise awareness among the community, and advance public policies regarding palliative care.