OCTOBER 2009
NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE

Compassion Sabbath Retreat with Vesta
Performance Well Attended by Clergy and Healthcare Professionals

The Institute and the Coalition for Quality at the End of Life (CQEL) held Compassion Sabbath: Heart, Mind & Soul. Enhancing Clergy’s and Faith Community’s Role in Caring for the Seriously Ill, on October 13, at Family Hospice and Palliative Care (FHPC) in Mt. Lebanon. Compassion Sabbath was well attended by local clergy and health care professionals and received extremely positive feedback.

Compassion Sabbath began with a warm welcome from Rafael Sciullo, CEO of FHPC, followed by keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Thomas Long. Rev. Long’s lecture presentation focused on the messages in his newly published book: Accompany Them with Singing – the Christian Funeral, which provides a theological and cultural critique of today’s Christian funeral and thoughtful guidance for planning and preaching funerals. Simultaneous workshops were held with Dr. Susan Hunt presenting “The Dying Experience,” while Dr. David Barnard discussed “Ethical and legal context for patient and family decision making.” Rev. Leonard Sponaugle, Spiritual Care Specialist/ Chaplain at Family Hospice and Palliative Care and Rev. B. De Neice Welch, pastor of Bidwell Presbyterian Church, led open discussions related to the application and practice of the information from the workshops and keynote presentation.

After dinner, as a special part of Compassion Sabbath, Vesta was performed as a staged reading by Rita Gregory & Company, with Rita playing the lead role of Vesta. This nationally renowned drama of aging, love and loss, led the audience through a variety of emotions in dealing with one family’s struggle in coming to terms with the fact that their matriarch, Vesta, is nearing the end of her life.

The Institute and CQEL Are Set to Launch Palliative Care Resource Website for Southwestern PA

The long anticipated palliative care resource website, compassionatecareforall.org, will be launched before the New Year. The website will be a regional resource for Southwestern PA focusing on helping people with serious illnesses and their loved ones.

Institute Researcher Wins Funding Award

Dr. Mamta Bhatnagar, an assistant professor of medicine in the Section of Palliative Care and Medical Ethics at the University of Pittsburgh has been awarded funding for her research entitled, “Falls in Hospice: Examining Risk Factors in the Hospice Population: A Hospice Provider Study” and is preparing to present the results of her research project.

For palliative care consultations please contact the Palliative Care Program at PUH/MUH, 647-7243, beeper 8511, Shadyside Dept. of Medical Ethics and Palliative Care, beeper 412-647-7243 pager # 8513 or call 412-623-3008, Perioperative/ Trauma Pain 647-7243, beeper 7246, UPCI Cancer Pain Service, beeper 644 –1724, Interventional Pain 784-4000, Magee Women’s Hospital, beeper 412-647-7243 pager #: 8510, VA Palliative Care Program, 688-6178, beeper 296. Hillman Outpatient: 412-692-4724. For ethics consultations at UPMC Presbyterian-Montefiore, and Children’s page 958-3844. With comments about “Case of the Month” call David Barnard at 647-5701.
Prior to the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Bhatnagar received her medical education at Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi, India and completed an internal medicine residency at Case Western University in Ohio. Dr Bhatnagar subsequently completed a fellowship in Geriatrics from the Cleveland Clinic and a Palliative Medicine fellowship from Summa Hospital Health System in Ohio and is currently pursuing a Masters in Clinical Research at the University of Pittsburgh. Through her research she hopes to enhance understanding of the nature and risks of falls among hospice patients leading to assessment and prevention.

The Institute Welcomes Interim Manager of Programs and Communication

The Institute welcomes Monica Ceraso as the Interim Manager of Programs and Communication. Monica is filling in for Paige Hepple while on maternity leave and is working on launching the Compassionate Care for All website along with many of the day-to-day coordination of Institute activities and programs.

The Institute’s Dr. Steven Albert recently presented his research “The End of Life as a Public Health Issue.” His research centers on the assessment of health outcomes in aging and chronic disease, including physical and cognitive function, health service use and the cost of care, quality of life, and clinical decision making. His current efforts include a study of worksite health promotion, modeling of vaccine refusal across the lifespan, and public health surveillance of the end of life. Some of Dr. Albert’s broader interests involve international aging and a life-span approach to health in old age. Dr. Albert's research focuses on neurological deficits and the relationships of these deficits to health outcomes, levels of functioning, and overall quality of life. He is also heavily involved in studies examining patient and family decision making in palliative care and end-of-life issues. Dr. Albert is a Professor of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Public. He also directs the Department's Public Health Gerontology Program. Prior to the University, Dr. Albert was an Associate Professor at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, and the Director of the Outcomes Division of the Sergiesky Center. At Columbia he also was Co-Director of the MPH Program in Aging and Public Health. Based on his research, Dr. Albert is recognized as an expert in the measurement of function and health-related quality of life, and is known for his efforts to link his neurological research to public health initiatives.