Compassionate Allies Program
*Introductory Presentation For Students*

Seasons Hospice Foundation
in collaboration with
Northwestern University
Patients’ Needs

Many patients with terminal illnesses have an inadequate family and professional support system to deal with issues that arise at the end of life, such as facing death and fulfilling last wishes.
Needs of Future Physicians

Currently, there is not enough training in end-of-life issues for medical professionals.

With the baby boom generation growing older, there will be a greater need than ever for physicians to be equipped to care for patients at the end of life.
Talking about Death

• It can take a lot of practice for doctors to build the skills to talk to patients about sensitive topics such as death and dying.

• "This is so uncomfortable," said Dr. Biren Saraiya, an oncology fellow at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, searching for the right words to tell a young man that his cancer might be back.

• “I am afraid for him. But how afraid should I make him?”
Developed in collaboration with Wayne State University, this program provides didactic training and experiential learning to pre-med and medical students.

On-boarded as special volunteers at Seasons Hospice and Palliative Care (SHPC), this program brings these students into the homes of hospice patients to learn the gift of presence and understand the impact of legacy projects.

For most, this experience is their first exposure to end of life care. We hope to shape the journey of the next generation of physicians.
Program Goals

1. To educate future physicians about the importance of a holistic approach to care
2. To provide a service-learning opportunity for pre-med students by pairing them with a hospice patient/family
3. Through these visits, students will understand the importance of communication skills and bedside manner
4. Students will develop a sensitivity to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual challenges experienced by patients and families during the end of life journey
Role of the Compassionate Ally

1. Gain an understanding of the patient's physical, emotional, social and spiritual suffering
2. Connect deeply with the person suffering from terminal illness by establishing a bond of trust
3. Provide presence and listen to the patient's stories in a nonjudgmental fashion
4. If applicable, assist the patient in completing a legacy project
Responsibilities of the Compassionate Ally

1. Complete all SHPC Volunteer Orientation and onboarding requirements
2. Complete all Compassionate Ally Training Sessions
3. Complete the Statement of Understanding. (Students must be willing to participate in this program April-August.)
4. Submit documentation for patient visits in a timely manner to the Volunteer Manager
Compassionate Allies Training Modules

1. Overview of Life-limiting Illness
2. The Role of Stories and Compassionate Listening
3. Legacy Projects: Concepts and Theories
4. Legacy Projects: Applications
Legacy Project

- **Legacy** is something that is transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past
- Legacy projects are important to prepare a family for impending death, share life lessons, and celebrate the events in the life of the patient
- Examples include: memory boards, cookbooks, and voice recordings
Identifying Patients and Matching Participants

- The hospice care team at the Seasons Hospice will identify and invite eligible patients to participate.
- Once a patient and his or her family agree to be part of the program, they will be matched to a compatible and available Compassionate Ally.
- Students will be required to complete a note of volunteer documentation after each session with their patient (record activity and time spent with patient).
- Students may be asked to volunteer with patients who are not able to complete a Legacy Project.
Proposed 2016 Timeline

4/20 – 5:30 pm-8:00 --- Seasons Hospice Volunteer Orientation at Northwestern
5/14 – 10:00 am-12:00 --- Modules 1 & 2
5/21 – 10:00 am-12:00 --- Modules 3 & 4
5/31 – Compassionate Ally/Patient matches begin!
6/23 – 5:30 pm-6:30 --- Debrief session #1
7/28 – 5:30 pm-6:30 --- Debrief session #2
8/17 – 5:30 pm-6:30 --- Compassionate Ally Graduation
References