

Palliative News

Christine Ritchie Returns to UAB as Director of the Center for Palliative Care

Volume 1, Issue 1
Winter, 2005

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Christine Ritchie, M.D., M.S.P.H., returned to UAB in October, 2004 to become Director of the Center for Palliative Care. Dr. Ritchie, Board Certified in Geriatric Medicine and in Palliative Medicine, is a graduate of Davidson College (NC) and UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine. She completed her residency in internal medicine, a chief residency, and a geriatric medicine fellowship at UAB prior to joining the UAB Department of Medicine in 1994.

After a brief tenure at Boston University while her husband attended the Harvard School of Government, Dr. Ritchie and her family moved to Louisville, KY in 1998 where she served as a faculty member at the University of Louisville (UofL). While at UofL, she developed geriatric and palliative care programs in her role as the Associate Chief of Staff for the Geriatrics and Extended Care Service

at the Louisville VA Medical Center.

“The UAB Center for Palliative Care is positioned to be one of the foremost palliative care programs in the country.”

Dr. Ritchie is delighted to lead the UAB CPC.

Dr. Ritchie’s goal is to continue the strong momentum initiated by the Center’s founder, Dr. John Shuster, and to support the Center’s development into a great organization that is contributing to the community through compassionate clinical care, effective education and innovative research.

Dr. Ritchie, is also working to enhance the Center’s supportive care services, with the goal of serving as a resource for Distress Management in breast cancer patients, in particular,

and for all patients experiencing a serious or life threatening illness.

For more information or to contact Dr. Ritchie, call 205-975-8197.

In the News

Dr. Amos Bailey and Dr. Carol Griffin were featured in the Birmingham Post Herald on Thursday, January 13th in an article entitled “Help for the Dying”
Check out the archives at :

www.postherald.com

VA Grant Seeks to Improve Hospital Care at Life’s End

Drs. Kathryn Burgio and Amos Bailey are the Co-PI's on a new VA Health Services Research and Development entitled "To improve the Processes of Care in the Last Hours of Life in the Hospital", an intervention directed to five large Academic Veteran Administration Medical Centers (VAMC) in the southeast. The project will work to improve skills in recog-

nizing when patients are dying and offer a structured Comfort Care Order Set to guide the medical team in provision of comfort and supportive care using the home hospice model but in the hospital. The preliminary work done at Birmingham VAMC had impressive results in changing the processes of care, and has recently been accepted for

publication in the Archives of Internal Medicine and was presented in Poster Form at the Annual Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine in New Orleans in January 2005. For information please contact Dr. Kathryn Burgio at 205-558-7067 or Dr. Amos Bailey at 205-933-8101 x 5535.

American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine Awards Fellowship Grant to UAB

The AAHPM along with the National Hospice Foundation has announced the **2005 recipients** of fellowship program funding awards. The UAB Palliative Medicine Fellowship program was named as one of only three awards nationwide.

The grant award of \$150,000 has been made possible through the National Hospice Foundation's Commitment to the Scholars Program and will secure funding of a portion of two fellows stipends and coordinator staff beginning in July of 2005.

The Academy commented that

there were many applications during this cycle and the selections were difficult and competitive.

We will be welcoming three new

The UAB Fellowship program was one of three programs funded in the country.

physicians to Alabama and UAB beginning in July as part of this training program.

Dr. Ryan Nash will be the first to join the program from Houston, Texas where he is currently serving a Chief Resident position at the

University of Texas-Houston Medical School.

The faculty, staff, and all of the supporters of the Palliative Medicine program will join in welcoming Ryan to Birmingham and UAB.

What is Palliative Care:

Where Hospice focuses basically on the last six months of life, Palliative Care focuses on maintaining quality of life of patient with advanced illness who may yet have many years to live.

NIH State of Science Conference Addresses End of Life Care

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) State-of-the Science Conference on Improving End-of-Life Care was held in December, 2004 at the NIH Campus in Bethesda, Maryland. The conference brought experts in the field who presented to an independent panel the latest end-of-life research findings and scientific evidence which addressed the following key questions:

What defines the transition to end of life?

The panel addressed the lack of clarity regarding the definition of "end-of-life" and the criteria for determining when the end-of-life begins, noting that the terms palliative care, end-of-life care, and hospice care have been used interchangeably.

What patient, family, and health care system factors are associated with improved or worsened outcomes?

The panel noted research on the patient, family, and system factors that improve or worsen outcomes is limited and minorities are underrepresented in end-of-life research.

What outcome variables are important indicators of the quality of the end-of-life experience for the dying person and for the surviving loved ones?

The panel observed that although outcome domains and measured variables on end-of-life have been described, these measures have not been used consistently and validated longitudinally. In addition, tools have not undergone rigorous examination for conceptual and measurement equivalence in different population groups.

What processes and interventions are associated with improved or worsened outcomes?

The panel observed that although there is a growing research on interventions in symptom management, spiritual aspects of dying, withdrawal of life-sustaining treatments, family caregiving, and bereavement, most interventions are not explicitly theory based and minorities are underrepresented in end-of-life research.

What are the future research directions for improving end-of-life care?

The panel concluded that there is a need to have a research infrastructure with adequate funding and timely translation of research into clinical practice and to address the current Medicare hospice benefit which limits the availability of the full range of interventions needed by many persons at the end of life.

Members of the Center for Palliative Care are actively investigating answers to many of these questions.

A copy of the complete statement draft can be downloaded from the website: www.consensus.nih.gov.

Members of the UAB Center for Palliative Care and the VA GRECC who attended were Drs. Joseph Chan, Beverly Williams, Kathy Burgio, Patty Goode, and Lesa Woodby.

PALLIATIVE CARE UNITS TO OPEN IN 2005

“Enhancing Systems of Care”

The Birmingham VA Medical Center “Safe Harbor” Palliative Care Unit is scheduled to open in Summer, 2005. This 12 bed in-patient unit will provide high quality end of life care to veterans for whom such care is not feasible in another setting. The workgroup for this unit is headed by Center for Palliative Care faculty member and VA Palliative Care Clinical Director, Dr. Amos Bailey along with representatives from nursing, social work, medicine, administration, members of the Center for Palliative Care (CPC).

Veterans Service Organizations have donated resources to contribute to the comfort and beauty of the unit, including providing funds to include photographic renderings of nature scenes from throughout the state of Alabama in the Unit and in patient rooms. Interested individuals should contact Jeffrey Hester at 205-558 4744 or Amos Bailey at 205-933-8101 ext 5355.

SAVE THE DATE
2005
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER
TUESDAY
OCTOBER 11th 2005
ALYS STEPHENS CENTER

The University of Alabama Hospital and UAB Health System will open a 12 bed in-patient Palliative Care Unit by the end of 2005. The workgroup for this project is headed by Center for Palliative Care faculty member and UAB Palliative Care Clinical Director, Dr. Rodney Tucker, along with representatives from University Hospital, the UAB Health System, Department of Medicine, and members of the CPC.

The UAB PCU will be comprised of 12 private patient rooms including one suite with a private family room, a nursing station, family lounge, conference room, a bereavement room, and a treatment or exam room. Care for the patients on this unit will be guided in an interdisciplinary fashion with professionals from throughout the medical center involved. Traditional medical interventions as well as complimentary therapies including pet therapy, music, and art therapy will be offered. Pastoral care and psychological support for patients and families will be emphasized as well. Artist renderings of the unit are available for viewing at www.palliative.uab.edu.

Members of the community and supporters of the CPC will be in-

involved in aspects of the design and décor of the unit with special emphasis placed on the aesthetic feel and the art that is incorporated into the space. Volunteers will be sought from throughout the community at large to interact with the patients, families, and staff once the unit is open. Interested individuals should contact **Maryhelen Kirkpatrick at 975-0848 or Jackie Palmore at 975-0826.**

Both the VA Palliative Care Unit and the UAB Palliative Care Unit will serve as a special place within the larger medical centers in which patients with progressive and life limiting illness as well as their families will be able to spend a portion of their health care journey receiving care from palliative care-trained staff in an environment that fosters comfort and dignity.

| | 1901 | 2001 |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Life expectancy | 49 years | 77 years |
| Usual place of death | home | hospital |
| Disability before death | usually not much | 2 years, on average |

Center for Palliative Care Activities and Opportunities for Involvement

The UAB Center for Palliative Care (CPC) has participated in 3 successful fundraisers and is continuing to raise funds for the UAB In Patient Care Unit opening in University hospital in late 2005.

The CPC held this past year’s event at the Alys Stephens Center in October of 2004 and raised over \$30,000. The evening was filled with many exciting activities. This year’s event honored John L, Shuster, Jr. M.D., founder of the UAB Palliative Medicine Program and the first Director of the UAB Center for Palliative Care. Dr. Shuster is now a full time research physician in the VA Healthcare system, in Tuscaloosa. The guests enjoyed a lovely buffet dinner and a live and silent auction.

The date for this year’s event is **Tuesday, October 11, 2005** at the Alys Stephens Center. If anyone is interested in volunteering please

call **Maryhelen Kirkpatrick-975-0848.**

The Center for Palliative Care has an on going memorial program. Your donation can be designated as a memorial or a tribute gift to honor a friend or loved one. A letter will be sent as an acknowledgment and thank you for your support.

UAB CENTER FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

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UAB CENTER FOR
PALLIATIVE CARE

*Healing is more than
cure—
It includes wholeness,
comfort and peace.*

The Center for Palliative Care leads initiative to Improve complex and Advanced Illness Care

The number of Americans experiencing complex and advanced illness is growing, in large part, due to the aging of our society and the success of medical technology to prevent death from acute causes.

Health care professionals are currently not trained to meet the needs of the large and growing number of people facing a long period of progressive illness and disability before death. Patients with complex and advanced illness often navigate a fragmented and confusing care system, leading to distress for patients and their families.

Medical education is organized around diagnosis, which drives the course of care and treatment. Often, less attention is given to symptoms, function, coordination of services, and quality of life. Patients with complex and advanced illness have multiple diagnoses, none of

which may be particularly revealing about the severity of his/her condition or his overall care needs.

The UAB Center for Palliative Care, with support from the American Academy of Medical Colleges and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is leading an initiative to develop a UAB/BVAMC academic chronic care collaborative that addresses both educational and quality improvement interventions with the following objectives:

- To promote patient comfort, even with serious chronic illness;
- To promote continuity and comprehensiveness of care; and
- To promote advance care planning and self management strategies to improve quality of life (QoL).

They will participate with 24 other hospitals from around the country to develop quality improvement programs that include training of health care professionals in state of the art chronic illness care.

DID YOU KNOW?

Despite most people stating that they would prefer to die at home...

3/4 of all deaths take place either in hospitals or nursing homes.