Philanthropists Patty and Jay Baker in March made a landmark $10 million gift to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai to expand its national programs in palliative care. The gift has the potential to transform the care of seriously ill patients and their families by funding a new center to support public policy, education, training, national outreach and research. The new center, to be named “The Patty and Jay Baker National Palliative Care Center at Mount Sinai,” will unite under one umbrella Mount Sinai’s existing National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC) and the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), creating greater opportunities for innovation and collaboration. The Center will be jointly led by Diane E. Meier, MD, Director of CAPC, and by R. Sean Morrison, MD, Director of the NPCRC and of Mount Sinai’s Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute.

The mission of the Center is to ensure that all patients living with serious illness and their families understand the role of palliative care in improving quality of life and that they are aware that they can request it; that all clinicians have the knowledge and skills to provide palliative care; and that all healthcare institutions are equipped to deliver it,” said Dr. Morrison.

“Everyone should have easy access to palliative care services on a national level.”
Hertzberg Faculty Enjoy Strong Presence at AAHPM Conference

Annual meeting is now largest gathering of palliative care professionals in the world.

Faculty from Mount Sinai’s Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute enjoyed a strong presence at the world’s largest gathering of palliative care professionals, hosted in San Diego in March by the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. “It is so exciting to see that in the setting of clinical research, Mount Sinai faculty had the largest impact of any institution – both in terms of the diversity and the number of presentations – and that what we have learned is being shared with the rest of the country,” said R. Sean Morrison, MD, Director of the Mount Sinai Palliative Care Institute. Morrison was awarded the award for the best presentation in April, fostering new skills for licensed massage therapists to work safely and effectively with seriously ill patients in a variety of settings.

The two-day conference, now in its ninth year, is led by an interdisciplinary team of licensed massage therapists, advanced practice nurses, and physicians from Mount Sinai’s nationally recognized palliative care program. The goal of the program is to disseminate massage techniques for seriously ill patients to nursing homes, hospitals and other settings of care around the country. Instruction takes place in small groups.

Attendees left the conference with new skills for assessing patients, modified massage techniques for treating patients with chronic progressive diseases, and an understanding of the hospital environment as a setting of care.

“I still like to water my roses, I appreciate high levels of delicacy, it takes a lot of hard work, strenuous details, the center balance of delicacy. A lot of love a lot of close supervision to keep that balance just like waxing a car after the detail, it shines up like no other a lot of laboring, the scratch removal, the touch-up painting, intensified cleansing, you’re making him feel like he’s peeling out of a dead skin, all these maneuvers require delicacy and subtlety in movements, eye movements, hand movement, emotions, the motions, commotion, with extra lotion, that’s the magic potion to stop from being corrosion, finally the explosion of exposure of the fine work in the end, I still like to water my roses.”

by Alex Li
February 25, 2014

Hertzberg Hosts 9th Annual Massage Therapy Training Conference

Workshop teaches new skills for therapists to apply to seriously ill patients

18th Annual
Douglas West Endowed Memorial Visiting Lecture
Katy Butler presents
“Knocking on Heaven’s Door”
Monday, May 19th at 5:30 PM
Goldwurm Auditorium, Icahn Medical Institute
1425 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10029

The Massage Therapy Program at the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute held its annual training conference in April, fostering new skills for licensed massage therapists to work safely and effectively with seriously ill patients in a variety of settings.

Therapy Training Conference
Hertzberg Hosts 9th Annual Massage Therapy Training Conference
WORKSHOP TEACHES NEW SKILLS FOR THERAPISTs TO APPLY TO SERIOUSLY ILL PATIENTS

The patient really guides the session. Even if that means we massage just one hand, the effects can be meaningful,” said Mr. Elder.

Attendees at the conference also learned how to formulate effective care plans, identify strategies to help patients care for themselves, and consider other complementary ways to reduce stress and promote comfort and relaxation.

The conference is funded through a grant from the Balm Foundation, which has provided more than 14 years of support for the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute’s massage program. In that time span, the therapists in the program have provided serious illness patients and their family members with more than 14,000 massages.
Music can be used as a way to manage pain, explains Mr. O’Connor, by using guided imagery to produce a music-assisted relaxation. Some patients prefer a more active role in music-making, enjoying the spontaneity of improvisation or the self-expression in song writing. Family members can also benefit from making music, providing them with a way to communicate with their loved ones when they may be too weak to speak.

Hertzberg’s complementary and alternative therapies were recently commended as “cutting edge and setting an example for the field” by the Joint Commission, America’s oldest and largest standards and accreditation organization in healthcare.

For Sarah Yazdian, the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute’s Art Therapist, every picture tells the artist’s story. Ms. Yazdian has helped patients convey their pain, fear, acceptance and recovery through art forms that include paint, plaster and poetry.

“People are very surprised by the power of the art,” says Ms. Yazdian, who herself has always enjoyed painting as a soothing and mindful experience. “We can use it to enhance quality of life for patients, and as a way to help patients and families communicate when they may not have the words to express how they feel.”

The arts therapy program at the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute has grown in the last year, expanding to include music and creative writing, with the work of music therapist Todd O’Connor and creative writing specialist Thomas Dooley. The program – which is 100% donor funded – has been helping patients since September 2011.

Art therapy is the therapeutic use of conceiving and producing art by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living. Through creating art and reflecting on the process and finished product, the artist can develop awareness of self and of others, improve communication and expression of feelings, and cope with symptoms such as pain, stress and traumatic experiences.

In the course of working with a 40-year-old breast cancer patient recovering from a double mastectomy, Ms. Yazdian focused on art making that could help the patient accept her disease process. “Making collages helped her to address how she saw her womanhood after the surgery,” says Ms. Yazdian. “Cutting, pasting, integrating and rearranging provided a non-verbal way for her to let out her very complex experience of pain.”

Art-making is a very effective way to help young children prepare emotionally for the loss of a seriously ill parent or grandparent, while also providing a means to connect with their loved one through making art together. Ms. Yazdian has undertaken a variety of “legacy projects” with young children, such as memory boxes and handprints in plaster.
Mount Sinai Hospital and the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute in December were re-awarded the Advanced Certification for Palliative Care from the Joint Commission, the country’s oldest and largest standards and accreditation organization in healthcare.

“As was the case two years ago during our initial certification, our surveyor was incredibly impressed with the scope and depth of our program, our commitment to patient and family care, and most importantly, the quality of clinical care that we provide,” said R. Sean Morrison, MD, Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute and Co-Director of the Baker National Palliative Care Center at Mount Sinai. “Our surveyor also commented that our complementary and alternative therapies are cutting edge and setting an example for the field.”

The Joint Commission’s voluntary certification program, launched in 2011, was developed under the guidance of a national task force of experts on palliative care. Mount Sinai Medical Center was among the first five hospitals to be awarded the new certification that year. Hospitals wishing to retain the certification must be reassessed every two years, submitting to a rigorous evaluation of every element of the interdisciplinary program, together with a full-day site visit.

Palliative care is a relatively new medical specialty designed to relieve the pain, symptoms and stress of serious illness. It provides a multi-disciplinary treatment model for patients of all ages and at all stages of a serious illness, whatever the prognosis. The Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, together with other leading programs in the country, has demonstrated that this kind of care improves quality of life and patient satisfaction, while also reducing costs.

As a result, the field of palliative care has gained considerable traction in recent years. Growing numbers of US hospitals are adding palliative care expertise, many with the support of Mount Sinai’s Center to Advance Palliative Care. To date, 55 organizations across the country have secured the Joint Commission’s Advanced Certification for their palliative care programs.

“Certification is so important because it confirms for patients and their families that they are being cared for in a high quality program, and it allows people to make informed choices,” said Emily Chai, MD, Associate Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute. “The growth of the certification program is a real marker that palliative care has come of age.”