



Jay Baker, Patty Baker, R. Sean Morrison, MD, and Diane E. Meier, MD

The Patty and Jay Baker National Palliative Care Center: Advancing Palliative Care Through Innovation and Advocacy

Since its inception a decade ago, The Patty and Jay Baker National Palliative Care Center at Mount Sinai has advanced the field and delivered high-quality palliative care to millions of seriously ill persons and their families across the nation. In October 2023, Mr. and Mrs. Baker announced their commitment to the Center's continued innovation and impact.

Palliative care is the fastest-growing medical specialty; it can be found in the majority of mid-size to large hospitals; and it increasingly meets the needs of the skyrocketing population of older adults living with serious illness. However, integrating innovative palliative care into the national health care system requires persistence, discipline, and outreach.

With the Bakers' visionary leadership, the Center trains and supports health care professionals to provide exceptional care while investing in researchers who examine crucial issues.

"We are ensuring that all patients can access these services, with an increasing focus on community-based settings, where the future of health care is heading," says R. Sean Morrison, MD, Founder and Director of the National Palliative Care Research Center and the Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine. "With the Bakers' support, we have invested in the talent and tools to transform the care of people living with serious illness. They have changed the way we deliver care to those

most in need of it."

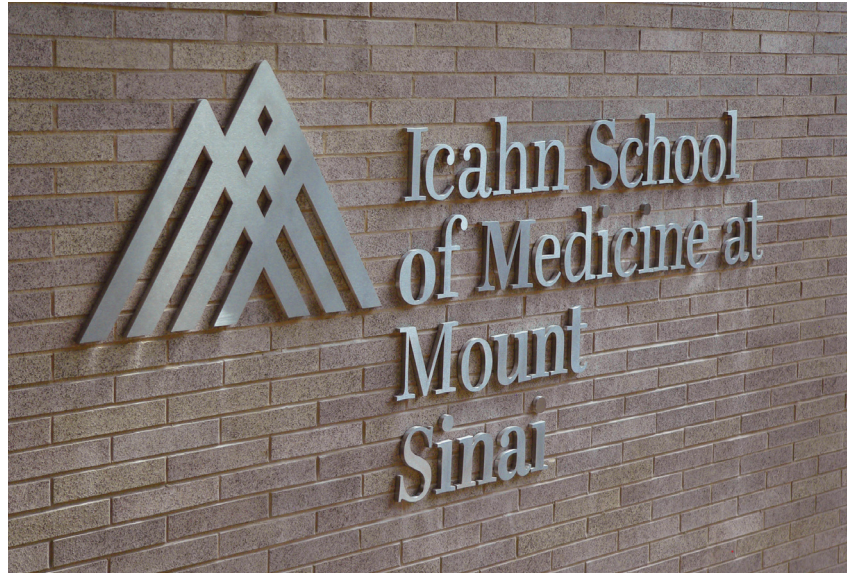
The Center, established with a landmark \$10 million gift in 2013, was founded to support public policy, education, training, national outreach, and research. It united the Brookdale Department's existing Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) and National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC), creating greater opportunities for innovation and collaboration. CAPC is instrumental in teaching clinicians the knowledge

and skills needed to bring relief and respect to people living with serious illness. And NPCRC fosters a thriving research community dedicated to strengthening the foundation of evidence for health policy and clinical practice.

"Patty and Jay's influence on palliative care—and its resulting impact on the many millions of patients and families who benefit from this work—has been nothing short of transformative," says Diane E. Meier, MD, Founder, Director Emerita, and Strategic Medical Advisor of the Center to Advance Palliative Medicine. "The lasting effects of our work go well beyond the numbers. From the lives we touch and the skilled and compassionate communities we inspire, to the extraordinary researchers we support, we are united in our commitment to expand and improve palliative care through innovation and collaboration. Our impact—and the scale at which we are able to make progress—could not have happened without the Bakers' commitment to the importance of this work and extraordinary philanthropic investment."

New Medical School Curriculum Will Prepare Doctors to Better Meet the Needs of Seriously Ill Patients

With help from the Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is redesigning its medical school curriculum to meet the needs of those with serious illness and their caregivers. Among the changes that will be implemented beginning in August 2024, palliative care education will be spread throughout all four years of medical school. This will include a two-week rotation in palliative care, which many medical schools don't require. Under the supervision of physician specialists, medical students will round on the Wiener Family Palliative Care Unit, see inpatient consults, and see ambulatory patients in the Martha Stewart Center for Living Uptown.



“For those of us in the field, it’s super exciting to have palliative care incorporated in the overall medical school curriculum because that doesn’t happen at most schools,” says Helen M. Fernandez, MD, MPH, Vice Chair of Education in the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine. “It’s not that everyone will specialize in palliative care, but they will carry these skills and this approach into whatever specialty they go into.”

The new medical school curriculum includes a shift that gives students more clinical exposure earlier in their training, taking them out of the classroom and into clinical apprenticeships.

One focus of palliative care education is building strong communication skills between doctors, patients, and caregivers considering the emotional impact of serious illness. Future doctors are trained in how to discuss a patient’s prognosis and how to elicit a patient’s goals and expectations. There will

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also be increased emphasis on pain assessment and understanding how chronic pain affects a patient’s life.

Teamwork and counseling skills will be emphasized throughout the four-year program. In order to fully care for their patients, medical students will learn

how to embrace a multidisciplinary team that includes nurses and social workers, and how to work collaboratively to address social determinants of health, such as housing, food insecurity, access to care, and other potential barriers to health that patients face.

“We have been working on this new curriculum for over a year now — with students, stakeholders in the community, and within the medical school — to provide the best medical training in a way that’s more interactive and more responsive,” says Dr. Fernandez. “Icahn Mount Sinai is committed to innovation as we develop a curriculum that better recognizes the needs of the diverse communities we serve and that also takes students out of the classroom earlier in their training and gives them clinical exposure.”

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Provider Spotlight: JD Elder, MA, LMT

Licensed Massage Therapist and Complementary Therapies Program Coordinator

Following a long career in fitness and sports-related massage, JD Elder, MA, LMT, joined the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine to improve the lives of seriously ill patients, older adults, and their caregivers. With early philanthropic support from the Balm Foundation, Mr. Elder created the massage therapy program, which would expand to a variety of complimentary therapies, including mindfulness meditation, therapeutic positioning, and yoga.



“Just because people are ill doesn’t mean that is all they are. My work focuses on the sensory things that help them remember that fact,” says Mr. Elder. “Massage therapy has a multitude of benefits, but only works with only one sense: touch. Over the years, I’ve expanded the program’s offerings to address other senses as well. So that we can bring some moments of pleasure to an often uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and stressful situation.”

For the past three decades, Mr. Elder and his colleagues have offered patients and families comfort, relief, and support while empowering them with resources to encourage and practice self-care. Mr. Elder has trained and mentored countless licensed massage therapists and supported clinical teams through particularly challenging times.

Mr. Elder will retire in December 2023 after 29 years with the Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute. His legacy and programs will continue under new leadership.

Providing Comfort and Relief Through Massage Therapy



Palliative care provides relief from the symptoms and stress of serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family, and care is delivered through a multidisciplinary team approach. At the Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, licensed massage therapists are a key component to the care team.

Massage therapy has been shown to

significantly lessen physical discomfort, improve immune function, reduce inflammation, protect skin integrity, and alleviate stress and anxiety. Therapists offer traditional massage therapy ranging from

light-touch Reiki to acupressure and reflexology, as well as yoga therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, meditation, therapeutic repositioning, and sensory enhancements, such as adjusting sight, smells, and sounds patients encounter.

With symptom relief, comfort, and stress reduction as the goal of each massage therapy session, the techniques are slow,

deliberate, and calming to promote deep relaxation and greater healing benefit. Sessions are complementary and tailored to the unique needs of individual patients and caregivers. Therapists also provide basic massage therapy instruction and resources to empower patients and caregivers to care for and support themselves.

“The benefits of massage therapy and comforting, supportive touch cannot be overstated. Our seriously ill patients and their families are faced with a variety of issues – some physical, some psychosocial, and some emotional. Massage therapy offers comfort and relief for so many of these concerns and improves quality of life,” says R. Sean Morrison, MD, Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine.

In Memoriam: Diane Weg Farquhar, LCSW



On Sunday, November 12, the Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute lost a beloved friend and fierce patient advocate, Diane Weg Farquhar, LCSW.

Ms. Farquhar joined the Hertzberg Institute in 2011 and served as the first social worker on the Wiener Family

Palliative Care Unit as well as several successive palliative care consultation services. With her devotion to seriously ill persons and keen expertise into their unique needs, she set the standard for palliative care social work both at the Mount Sinai Health System and throughout the country. For more than a decade, Ms. Farquhar advocated for innumerable patients and their loved ones and left an indelible mark on medical and social work trainees.

As our trainees began programs of their own, they brought with them Ms. Farquhar's high standards.

"When you think of Diane, you think of her advocacy, her devotion, and her passion. She was a good force to be reckoned with. As the Hertzberg Institute expanded, she provided vital support to both patients and colleagues. Her death is a tremendous loss.

May her memory continue to inspire us," says R. Sean Morrison, MD, Ellen and Howard C. Katz Chair in the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine.

Ms. Farquhar was preceded in death by her late husband Doug Farquhar and parents Mary and John Weg. She is survived by her second husband Vincent Butkiewicz; three beloved daughters Laura Farquhar (Joe Bittner), Kathryn Farquhar, and Jamie Farquhar (Graham Christensen); two adored grandchildren Theodore and Abigail Bittner; five loving sisters; and her large extended family.



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