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SPRING 2011

IMPORTANT NEWS — VNSNY Haven Hospice Specialty Care Unit Opened

Dear Friends:

In the hospice field, we like to say, "Hospice is not a place, it is a philosophy of care."

While it is true that hospice care is delivered primarily in people's homes, whether it is their private home, apartment, assisted living facility or skilled nursing facility, there are indeed some hospice "places." For example, we operate the Shirley Goodman and Himan Brown Hospice Residence on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Another hospice "place" is our brand new, 25-bed unit at Bellevue Hospital Center. Opened on Valentine's Day, VNSNY Haven Hospice Specialty Care Unit is an important resource for our program, and the patients and families we serve. VNSNY Haven is for hospice patients who require round the clock medical and nursing intervention for symptom relief. Patients are expected to stay for three to five days.

VNSNY Haven was designed as a peaceful, therapeutic environment for patients and families. The décor was created in a welcoming, boutique hotel style.



VNSNY Haven patient room



VNSNY Haven family room



VNSNY Haven quiet room

We are already hearing accolades

"The staff is wonderful...amazing nurses and admin staff checking in and making things go. For the first time in his life, [my friend] let someone touch him to give him a massage; the therapist is nothing short of a miracle. The family room is warm and inviting...unlike hospital waiting areas that seem to intentionally make you NOT want to stay, this place was an oasis."

—Anne S.

Philanthropy will make a difference in our ability to maintain the exceptional ambience at VNSNY Haven, by providing support for wall art, flowers for patient rooms, internet service, to name a few needs. If you want to find out how you can help us, or how to memorialize a loved one, please contact Stefanie.steel@vnsny.org or call her at 212-609-7257.

Sincerely,

K. Jeanne Dennis, MSW
Senior Vice President

VNSNY Offers Fellowship Training

Since 2004, VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care has operated a Fellowship Training Program to provide hospice rotations for New York City physicians. Currently, there are seventeen fellows enrolled in the Hospice and Palliative Care Physician Fellowship Training Program. The fellows come from Mount Sinai Medical Center, Metropolitan Hospital, Montefiore Medical Center, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and New York Hospital Medical Center of Queens. The Program provides fellows with a structured learning experience in home-based, clinical care. The fellows are supervised by a VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care physician and work with a team of nurses, social workers, spiritual care counselors and bereavement counselors.



Dr. Catherine Lee, who is training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Hospice and Palliative Medicine and who will further train in Medical Oncology, completed the VNSNY Fellowship Training Program in the Fall of 2010, is full of praise: "The fellowship was a very crucial part of my training, giving me firsthand experience and a better perspective on how hospice care, with social services, spiritual counseling, nurses and physicians, has an impact on patients. This helps me better communicate to patients the benefits of hospice." She observes, "All medical students and residents could benefit, especially those dealing with chronic illnesses."

"The fellowship was a very crucial part of my training, giving me firsthand experience."

—CATHERINE LEE, MD,
MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING
CANCER CENTER

Dr. Leonard Bakalchuk, Local Hero



For 10 years, Dr. Leonard Bakalchuk was an Emergency Medicine physician, working at the St. Vincent's Hospital. Although he loved his career in the ER, he realized that some of his best experiences were working with families, as well as the home visits he did as a volunteer for the St. Vincent's Hospital Community Medicine Program. Six years ago, he decided to switch careers and since then he has been Manhattan Regional Medical Director for VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care. Dr. Bakalchuk says, "This is what I intend to do for the rest of my life."



Dr. Bakalchuk brings a tremendous range of skills to his work. After graduating from Williams College, he deferred his admission to Weill Medical College of Cornell University and spent two years in Hong Kong teaching English and learning Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese). He remains fluent in these languages and is the Asian Hospice Team Physician. He is also fluent in Spanish (his family is from Cuba) and serves many Spanish-speaking patients. He is Board Certified in Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and maintains his Emergency Room skills by working a few night shifts each month with the attending staff at the VA Medical Center—Manhattan.

Dr. Bakalchuk firmly believes that there is always a way to make every patient comfortable and he takes a holistic approach. He explains, "I try to 'normalize' the situation. This is what we do, we live and we die."

While reflecting on experiences in the ER, Dr. Bakalchuk cites the "heroic" role of physicians in the ER, but many Hospice patients and families describe him and his Hospice colleagues as "heroes" as well. He says, "VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care is unique in New York City in that physicians, as well as nurses, play a large role in caring for our patients." Dr. Bakalchuk concludes: "We work as a team, we all love our jobs and believe we are doing something very useful and important."

Volunteers Provide Bedside Vigils



Last summer, VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care launched a Vigil Care Volunteer program to train a special cadre of volunteers to provide a supportive presence at the bedside of patients who are in the last hours of their lives. Manager of Volunteers Alison Reynoso explains that the program started because there was a need for volunteers to sit at the bedside of patients who were dying alone, perhaps because their family was en route or because they had no nearby family.

Thirty-five volunteers are now trained as Vigil Volunteers. Each has undergone eight hours of special education so that they can learn what it means to be actively

"It just felt like something I need to do. I understand the philosophy that no one should die alone."

dying. Training from social workers, nurses and spiritual care professionals provides Vigil Volunteers with essential tools, such as deep listening skills,

compassionate touch and the ability to "honor silence."

The Vigil Volunteers now work in nursing homes and the Shirley Goodman and Himan Brown Hospice Residence. As the program grows, there will be an opportunity to support patients at home. According to Alison Reynoso, "The goal is to provide bedside vigils for every Hospice patient who needs it."

Abby Spilka, Director of Communications at The Museum of Jewish Heritage, has been a Hospice volunteer since 2006 and was trained to be a Vigil Volunteer in August. She says, "It just felt like something I need to do. I understand the philosophy that no one should die alone." Describing the first time she was at the bedside of a dying patient, Abby is full of emotion. "It was one of the most profound human experiences I have had. I felt connected to the universe in a way I have not felt before." Abby has shared her thoughts and feelings on a VNSNY blog. To read her posts, visit <http://blogs.vnsny.org>.

More Support For Children and Families

"KORU"

is an integral symbol in Maori art, depicting a new, unfurling silver fern frond; it symbolizes new life, growth, strength and peace. KORU: New Beginnings, Growth & Hope is also the name of a new VNSNY supportive program for children and families who have suffered a loss.

It is well documented that the death of a family member can be one of the most stressful life events for a child. Without support, a child can be at risk for depression, academic problems and difficult

interpersonal relationships well into adulthood. Thanks to a grant from The Edith Glick Shoolman Children's Foundation, VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care is now building a more formalized children's bereavement program.

The program will serve VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care families as well as children and families in the community at large. Dayna Wood, a VNSNY Bereavement Counselor and VNSNY Pediatric Palliative Care Clinical Counselor, is the coordinator of the KORU program.

According to Dayna, the first steps include undertaking a study of existing services throughout New York City and a needs assessment. In addition, with both one-on-one and group programs, KORU will help children and families process grief using films, stories and other media. KORU has already begun to meet the special needs of grieving teens: for six weeks starting in March, Dayna and Bereavement Counselor Melissa Figueroa ran a teen photography workshop. Also, Dayna is working in Brooklyn public schools, providing bereavement training to teachers and staff, spreading awareness of available resources and holding school-based grief support groups.

With a three-pronged approach of resource/referrals, direct services and training, the KORU program will truly provide new beginnings, growth and hope for children and families dealing with personal loss.



Quality Management at VNSNY: Fostering Standards of Excellence

There are many functions within VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care that are not apparent to patients and their families, and no department better exemplifies the crucial role of “behind the scenes” jobs more than Quality Management Services (QMS). QMS monitors all significant care outcome measures, including pain assessment, family satisfaction ratings and costs. Using scorecards, quarterly clinical outcomes are compared to benchmarks for resource

“VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care has exceeded the national standard [of giving comfort to patients within 48 hours] for the past eight years.”

utilization and documentation developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), based on data collected from hospices nationwide. For example, hospices report the percentage of patients who achieve comfort within 48 hours; VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care has exceeded the national standard for the past eight years.

VNSNY has been measuring Quality on a voluntary basis for several years. However, the Affordable Care Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama in March 2010 requires that the government must publish hospice quality measures by October 1, 2011.

Patricia Vigilante, Director of QMS for 10 years, built the department as the Hospice patient census grew from under 50 patients a day to approximately 700 patients today. Her department includes Quality Improvement Specialists, Education Managers and Orientation Nurse Instructors. They not only measure outcomes, they work to make improvements to prevent problems from arising. People development is their mission: Patricia says, “We show our staff how to be great teachers. We foster a passion for learning, improving care and service excellence.”

Interested in volunteering?

Many administrative and bedside volunteer opportunities are available at VNSNY Hospice Care.

For more information, please contact
taren.sterry@vnsny.org or
call her at 212.609.1908.

“Food For Thought” Events Held For Hospice Friends

This past winter, three donors hosted intimate evenings with wonderful hospitality, fascinating people and lively conversation, all for an important cause: VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care. More than 50 people attended and as a result, over \$12,000 was raised.

The first evening was a dinner hosted by Judy Fein and featured Broadway producer Barbara Freitag who talked about “From the Page to the Stage.” The second was a cocktail party hosted by Eugene Mercy, Jr., and showcased his spectacular collection of post-World War II American abstract expressionism, as described by Sukanya Rajaratnam from L&M Art Gallery. The third was a dinner hosted by Beth and Brad Whitman, with remarks from Belinda Luscombe, editor at large for TIME Magazine, who spoke about “Life, Love and the Pursuit of Sanity.” All three events were fully subscribed. Look for “Food for Thought” get-togethers next year!



Food for Thought
A Menu of Intimate Evenings
to Benefit
VNSNY Hospice Care

To learn more about VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care, go to: <http://www.vnsny.org/hospice>



Connections

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Published with the help of VNSNY's Marketing Department.

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