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\$924,000 Awarded for Palliative Care Research to Improve Care of Seriously Ill Patients

New York, NY –The National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC) is awarding \$924,000 in research grants for studies aimed at improving quality of life and eliminating suffering for seriously ill patients and their family caregivers. The NPCRC, in partnership with the American Cancer Society, has directed over \$3 million towards supporting palliative care research over the past 2 years.

“The research supported by the NPCRC will help create the knowledge base to ensure that all adults and children with serious illness and their loved ones will be able to live a normal life for as long as possible” stated Stephen Schwartz, President of the Brookdale Foundations and a major investor in the Center.

Palliative care focuses on relieving suffering and supporting the best possible quality of life for adults and children living with serious illness. It is a field comprised of doctors, nurses, social workers, and other specialists who care for patients with chronic illnesses, functional impairment, and a high burden of family caregiving responsibilities. It is provided at the same time as all other appropriate medical treatments.

“Thanks to the foresight and investments by the Brookdale, Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld, and Olive Branch Foundations, the American Cancer Society, the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and the National Institute on Aging in palliative care research, we are creating a world in which living with a serious illness will not mean living in pain or experiencing distressing symptoms like shortness of breath, nausea, or fatigue,” said NPCRC Director R. Sean Morrison, MD.

Support for palliative care research is of critical importance given the growing numbers of adults and children living, often for many years, with serious illness. “To date, there has been no significant investment in building research needed to adequately care for patients with serious illness. We believe that the NPCRC will quickly catalyze new investments in palliative care from philanthropy, government, corporations, and other organizations,” noted Christopher Angell, Esq., President of the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation. “We need to build national support to improve the quality of care for all Americans with serious illnesses.”

The 2008 Grantees:

Pilot Project Support Grant Recipients

University of California, San Francisco – Kathleen Puntillo, DNSc, RN, professor of nursing, will develop, implement, and evaluate an ICU nurse-driven intervention for patients’ symptoms that will

involve ICU patients' family members in the assessment and the non-pharmacological management of patients' symptoms. Potential outcomes of the research include decreased patient symptom burden, decreased families members' anxiety and depression, and increased family satisfaction with ICU care.

Indiana University School of Medicine – Greg A. Sachs, MD, professor of medicine, chief of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, scientist, IU Center for Aging Research and investigator, Regenstrief Institute, Inc, will evaluate the feasibility of incorporating an outpatient palliative care program for patients with dementia into the primary care setting. This pilot project has the potential to significantly improve care for community-based individuals with dementia, and to shape the programmatic development and policy across multiple settings.

Junior Faculty Career Development Award Recipients

University of California, San Francisco – Wendy G. Anderson MD, MS, assistant professor, Division of Hospital Medicine and Palliative Care Program, will study communication between hospitalist physicians and patients and their families. The data will help Dr. Anderson to develop an educational intervention to teach hospitalists skills for communicating with patients and their relatives about end-of-life issues and to test the ability of this intervention to decrease anxiety in seriously ill hospitalized patients and their relatives.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center/Norris Cotton Cancer Center - Marie Bakitas, DNSc, ARNP, FAAN, assistant professor of anesthesiology and medicine, Section of Palliative Medicine, will study the longitudinal decision- making and decision support needs of women with metastatic breast cancer. The findings from this study will help develop decision support interventions that can improve decision-making skills and increase integration of patient's values and preferences into palliative and oncology plans of care.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – Elisabeth Potts Dellon, MD, MPH, clinical instructor in pediatrics, will describe physicians' perspectives on the timing and content of discussions about the use of intensive treatments for patients with advanced cystic fibrosis lung disease and to use these and other data to develop and pilot a decision aid to facilitate communication and decision-making.

Northwestern University – Joseph Shega, MD, assistant professor of medicine, Division of Hematology/Oncology, will investigate relationships among cognitive impairment, non-cancer pain, and functional status in community dwelling seniors. Given the prevalence of non-cancer pain, cognitive impairment, and functional loss, the information derived from this study has the potential to inform important clinical, research, and policy-relevant decisions on the treatment of physical symptoms in older persons.

Further details about the NPCRC 2008 Grantees and their research projects are available at <http://www.npcrc.org/grantees/>.

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The National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC) promotes evidence-based palliative care research in order to improve the care of patients with serious illness, and their families. The NPCRC was established in July 2005 with a grant from the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation and has received subsequent funding from the Olive Branch Foundation, Brookdale Foundation, the American Cancer Society, the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and the National Institute on Aging. Located in New York City at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NPCRC works in partnership with the Center to Advance Palliative Care. For more information call 1.212.242.7447 or visit www.npcrc.org.