

KATHRYN A. REISER

Neil Samuel Ghiso Foundation Fellowship Report

Name: Kathryn Reiser

Class year: 2016

Type of project: Community service / education

Summary of Project and Benefits: *A summary of what you did and how the site benefited from your work there. Please say whether you worked on your project proposal as described or if you did anything different or in addition to what you set out to do.*

My NSGF fellowship has focused on improving communication and education around end of life choices. I helped to launch a National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD) and advance care planning program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and Graduate School of Nursing (GSN). These activities included hosting a major Continuing Medical Education (CME) event, creating a two-part skills session for medical and nursing students, and participating on the development team of a software platform to engage patients in advance care planning.

To prepare for these events, I participated in educational activities throughout the year to increase my knowledge of and competency in end of life discussions. I completed and received credit for a 9-hour elective course titled *Caring for the Seriously Ill* in the Spring 2013 semester. Shadowing the Palliative Care service at UMass Medical Center and a hospice nurse in May 2013 gave me clinical experience to ground the academic aspects of my training. In July 2013 I participated in a one-hour session on health care proxy and living wills at the American Medical Association annual meeting in Chicago. A one-day Principles of Palliative Care conference co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Medical Society and Massachusetts Pain Initiative in September 2013 introduced me to more advanced concepts in end of life care and pain management. Also in September, I read coursebooks from Respecting Choices, an internationally recognized, evidence-based advance care planning program, and materials from The Conversation Project, an organization dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end of life care. I selected end of life as the theme for my 2-week Population Health Clerkship in October 2013, a component of the UMass curriculum. In collaboration with Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center (AHEC), this experience provided immersion in community programs focused on selected topics in end of life care, including cultural humility, home hospice in an urban environment, legal issues, and advance care planning. In addition, I collaborated with GSN student colleague Beth Terhune to pilot My Gift of Grace, a card game designed to stimulate discussion about personal values and end of life wishes. Finally, in December 2013 I registered for online modules in end of life care from the Massachusetts Medical Society. These activities greatly increased my ability to carry out my project goals and objectives as planned.

I worked with a small team to organize and host the inaugural NHDD event at UMass on April 16, 2013. This team included palliative care physicians Drs. Suzana Makowski and Jennifer Reidy, surgical nurse practitioner Dr. Mary Sullivan, doctorate of nurse practitioner student Justin Gwatirisa, and medical student Joshua Cohen. My specific roles in the months leading up to the event were to read and research background materials, meet and communicate regularly with the NHDD team, complete the Continuing Medical Education (CME) application, secure

speakers for the event, and advertise to members of the UMMS and Worcester area communities via flyers, email, and a local radio show. On the day of the event, I set up and cleaned the event space, introduced the film and panel members, and moderated questions from the audience. The event was held on UMMS campus and broadcast to the UMass Memorial hospital to reach a broader audience of healthcare providers. The event consisted of a film screening and an expert panel discussion comprising two oncologists, a palliative care physician, an attorney, a paramedic, and a nurse practitioner. Approximately 40 people attended, including medical and nursing students and 18 clinicians who received CME credit.

I worked with my faculty adviser, Dr. Jennifer Reidy, to develop a two-part advance care planning training program in September and October 2013. We used a “train the trainers” model to engage a small group of 6 students, who then shared their expertise by leading a larger skills session open to all students at UMMS and GSN. I collaborated with student leaders from the bioethics, geriatrics, and primary care interest groups to feature the event as a central component of Primary Care Month at UMass and to fund lunch for all who attended. At the second session, 16 medical and nursing students piloted an educational tool called My Gift of Grace, which uses the format of a card game to encourage end of life conversations. This event benefitted UMass by offering students training that is not available in the current curriculum. I administered a survey adapted from the Respecting Choices coursebook before and after the sessions. The results, shown below, suggest that the training sessions increased students’ comfort initiating end of life discussions.

These numbers represent a sliding scale where 1 = completely disagree and 100 = completely agree with the statement.

| Statement | Average Before Session | Average After Session |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|
| I feel I am able to start a discussion about the use of future, potentially life-sustaining medical treatment with those close to me. | 50.8 (n = 12) | 65.2 (n = 12) |
| I feel I have enough knowledge to discuss my views of future, potentially life-sustaining medical treatment with those close to me. | 44.2 (n = 12) | 69.9 (n = 10) |
| I feel it is important to have a discussion of future, potentially life-sustaining treatment with those close to me. | 82.4 (n = 12) | 87.3 (n = 13) |
| I am likely to have a conversation with those close to me about future, potentially life-sustaining medical treatment. | 72.8 (n = 12) | 76.0 (n = 13) |

In addition to organizing the NHDD and advance care planning events, I have served as the student representative to an advance care planning working group at UMass. We have partnered with a start-up called Luminat to develop a web-based system for documenting end of life discussions and wishes. Specifically, my role has been to participate in drafting and editing the language of the patient interface. The team created value-based questions to elucidate what type of medical treatment patients would want at the end of life. This tool is set to pilot in February 2014 in the oncology clinics at UMass Medical Center. I will coordinate the effort of medical students, including those who completed the skills session this fall, to present this product to patients and their families. The initiative is expected to improve informed medical decision-making and promote quality end of life care. Although this project was not included in my initial fellowship proposal, it is closely integrated with my goals to promote NHDD, advance care planning, and end of life education.

Data, Evaluation and Achievement of Prior Goals and Objectives: *A re-statement of your goals and objectives (or any question that you hoped to answer). Explain whether or not you reached your objectives and why or why not.*

Goals:

- To educate and prepare UMass medical and nursing students in healthcare decision-making and how to address this issue with their patients. *Advance care planning education was offered to students in April, September, and October of this year.*
- To establish and develop an NHDD program at UMass Worcester that will continue as an annual event. *Three components of the NHDD program (1. Film screening and panel discussion, 2. Advance care planning skill sessions, 3. Luminat web-based tool for end-of-life discussions) were successfully launched. Plans are in place to continue each of these components in 2014.*
- To ensure that patients in our community receive the type of care they desire. *Education programs for current and future clinicians provided training to improve communication with patients and families about end of life wishes. The Luminat project will be piloted in February 2014 in the clinics at UMass Medical Center to promote educated decision-making and document patients' values and wishes for medical treatment at the end of life.*
- To improve and increase public awareness and understanding of advance care planning. *Extracurricular training in advance care planning was provided to clinicians and students of the medical and graduate nursing schools. To reach elders in the Worcester area community, I spoke on a local radio show called The Senior Focus in advance of NHDD 2013.*

Objectives:

- Host a major NHDD 2013 educational event offered to clinicians and students at 2 locations in Worcester MA, including film screening and multidisciplinary panel discussion on healthcare decisions and planning. *This objective was accomplished. The event was held at UMass Medical School and broadcast live to the UMass Memorial campus.*

- Identify panel members for April 16th 2013 event, including 2 panels each consisting of a palliative care physician, an oncology nurse, a paramedic, an estate lawyer, and a medical or graduate nursing student. *This objective was accomplished. One panel discussion was held and broadcast to the second location. The panel included medical oncologists Dr. Giles Whalen and Dr. Brad Switzer, elder and disability law attorney Nicholas Kaltsas, palliative care physician Dr. Suzana Makowski, nurse practitioner Dr. Jean Boucher, and paramedic Heidi Choquette. On the Memorial campus, questions were moderated by palliative care physician Dr. Jennifer Reidy, oncology nurse practitioner Dr. Mary Sullivan, and medical student Joshua Cohen. Doctor of Nurse Practitioner student Justin Gwatirisa and I moderated at the University campus.*
- Publicize NHDD 2013 and related educational events using high impact flyers and posters, UMass list serv emails, and announcements in medical and graduate nursing classes and grand rounds. *This objective was accomplished. I designed a flyer and achieved approval from the CME office to hang them throughout the hospital. My classmate Joshua Cohen submitted information about the event to faculty and student list servs. Graduate nursing student Justin Gwatirisa announced the event to the GSN. Dr. Suzana Makowski and I spoke about advance care planning and promoted the event on a local radio show called The Senior Focus hosted by attorney Nicholas Kaltsas, who also served as a panel member.*
- Organize and coordinate April 16th 2013 event details: licensing to show educational film *Consider the Conversation*, application to offer Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit for event attendance, audiovisual resources, light refreshments, and volunteer table set up. *This objective was accomplished. Two copies of the film were purchased by Dr. Mary Sullivan, who also reserved the rooms and requested A/V services. I wrote and submitted the CME application and staffed a sign-in table at the event for clinicians to apply for CME credit. Bottled water was supplied by the Cancer Committee for the panel members.*
- Recruit approximately 20 medical and nursing students from UMass Worcester campus to participate in training program and volunteer community outreach activities. Training will be available to all interested students. *This objective was accomplished. Seventeen students participated in the training sessions and expressed interest in community outreach planned for 2014.*
- Research training techniques for healthcare planning discussions, drawing from model programs including National Healthcare Decisions Day, The Conversation Project, and Respecting Choices. Skills training will include helping patients to identify their values, consider and understand available healthcare options, designate a healthcare proxy, and make informed end-of-life care decisions. *This objective was accomplished. In addition to the resources listed here, I drew on my participation in end of life training activities as described above.*
- Create and host 2-day training program for approximately 20 student volunteers using materials from model programs including National Healthcare Decisions Day website, The Conversation Project, and Respecting Choices. *This objective was accomplished. Seven medical students participated in the first day of training, identifying gaps in end of life education in the undergraduate medical curriculum. We generated strategies for introducing skills and concepts at the second session, which*

was attended by 10 additional UMass medical and graduate nursing students. We screened an audiovisual tool, created by myself and classmates during a 2-week population health clerkship in end-of-life care, that provided introductory information about health care proxy, palliative care, and hospice. We also piloted an educational card game called My Gift of Grace in small groups and discussed the challenges of end of life conversations with patients and loved ones. Both training sessions were facilitated by palliative care physician Dr. Jennifer Reidy.

- Identify high-traffic locations in the Worcester area for NHDD outreach, such as grocery stores, community/senior centers, and rehabilitation centers. *This objective will be accomplished in 2014. Based on my efforts with the Luminat web-based portal for facilitating and documenting advance care planning conversations, I have modified this plan to focus on locations within UMass Medical Center. For example, NHDD outreach may take place in the hospital lobby or in waiting rooms of specific outpatient clinics, rather than public places such as grocery stores.*
- Publicize NHDD 2014 and available outreach locations using high impact flyers and posters, announcements at community centers, and in-print and online Worcester area newspaper advertisements. *This objective will be accomplished in 2014. The Luminat web-based portal is scheduled to pilot with patients in February 2014. At that time, I will work with my physician mentors to target patients who could benefit most from advance care planning discussions. In addition, I will coordinate a group of students to promote Luminat in specific locations throughout UMass Medical Center.*
- Station student outreach teams (goal = ten 2-student outreach teams) to provide public education and resources surrounding end-of-life wishes on NHDD 2014 to Worcester area residents. *This objective will be accomplished in 2014. Based on attendance at the 3 events I helped to coordinate in 2013, at least 20 students are interested in participating. The outreach teams will provide education and resources using the Luminat product at specific locations within UMass Medical Center.*
- Ensure continued success of program by working with future students and implementing a training framework that empowers students to teach each other the skills they have developed as NHDD volunteers. *Accomplishment of this objective is ongoing. I am now working with several first year medical students who will continue this project when I begin clinical rotations to ensure a longitudinal NHDD program at UMass.*

Self Reflection: *A personal reflection on your participation in the project and what it meant to you (one paragraph).*

Thank you so much for the opportunity to complete an NSGF fellowship this year. Your generous support has helped me seek out and pursue training in palliative care and advance care planning during my preclinical years of medical school at the University of Massachusetts. When I begin rotations in a few short months, I know this experience and Neil's message will strengthen my ability to provide patients with the best possible care. Although I have not yet committed to a specialty, I believe the skills I have developed this year will serve me well in any field of medicine. I am very grateful to you and to Neil for championing compassion in undergraduate medical education.

Final Thoughts:

I look forward to continuing work on the NHDD and advance care planning program, and developing it further into a Capstone project. I am a member of the first UMass Medical School class to participate in the Capstone Scholarship and Discovery course. My NSGF fellowship activities will form the foundation for a longitudinal, mentored scholarly project in advance care planning. I am grateful to NSGF for affording me the opportunity to explore this field early in my medical education. Through this fellowship, I have been able to identify exciting projects as well as compassionate and committed mentors from which to build my Capstone.