

## ACCELERATING SCIENCE – ADVANCING MEDICINE

Unprecedented medical advances have enabled people to live longer and increased their expectations for good health over a longer lifespan. But multiple chronic illnesses are prevalent in this aging population and pose challenges for health care providers.

Mount Sinai's Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine—ranked the No. 1 geriatrics program for the second year in a row by *U.S. News & World Report*—has built one of the largest academic geriatrics programs in the country. We have taken a leadership role in uniting the fields of geriatrics and palliative medicine by ensuring that all of our graduates have a firm grounding in the best practices of both specialties.

Our medical school, residency program, and continuing education opportunities focus on inpatient and outpatient geriatrics, palliative care, long-term care, and home-based care, and

have helped improve health care delivery for older patients with complex medical needs.

Through our National Palliative Care Research Center, and recently awarded Claude D. Pepper Older American Independence Centers “Center of Excellence” program grant, we are advancing the practice and science of aging by nurturing a new generation of researchers in palliative care who are focused on improving the lives of patients and families living with serious illnesses.

With a focus on clinical care, education, and research, we are committed to meeting the needs of an aging population now and for generations to come.



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### ■ EDUCATION

## Training Tomorrow's Physicians



Rosanne Leipzig, MD

Most physicians will care for hundreds of elderly patients with complex and chronic illnesses during their careers. But until recently, most medical schools did not teach the interpersonal skills needed to deliver competent and compassionate palliative care.

At Mount Sinai, geriatrics and palliative care are woven into the medical school curriculum and advanced physician training programs. “We’re one of only a handful of medical schools in the country that require a month-long rotation in geriatric medicine for every student,” says Rosanne Leipzig, MD, Vice Chair of Education. “And our highly regarded fellowship programs train future academic leaders with excellent foundations in patient care and strong research backgrounds.”

Many of Mount Sinai's fellows go on to successful careers in geriatrics, and others assume leadership positions in palliative medicine. Originally launched as the first program in the country with integrated training in palliative care and hematology/oncology or geriatrics, Mount Sinai's one-year palliative medicine fellowship program allows fellows to combine the

clinical palliative care year with training in another subspecialty of internal medicine, such as pulmonary/critical care, cardiology, or nephrology. Fellows interested in a career as a clinician investigator may choose to complete an additional year of dedicated research in palliative and/or geriatric medicine.

The program, “Geritalk,” was created to help geriatrics and palliative care fellows develop the communication skills they need to work with elderly patients. The program combines presentations, small-group practice, and reflective exercises to help fellows learn how to deal with difficult conversations early in their professional careers. With new standards for Geriatric competencies in the pipeline, Dr. Leipzig says Mount Sinai fellows graduate ahead of the curve.

“In 2012, we plan to pilot a new joint fellowship program that will allow graduates to sit for both the Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine board exams,” she explains. Mount Sinai's Integrated Palliative Medicine Fellowship was awarded accreditation in 2009 by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

## RESEARCH FRONTIERS

### A Center of Excellence



R. Sean Morrison, MD

The Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine has received the Claude D. Pepper Older American Independence Centers (OAIC) program grant to establish "Centers of Excellence" in research and training.

"This award builds upon the foundation of pioneering research in aging and palliative care conducted at Mount Sinai over the past decade," says R. Sean Morrison, MD, Vice Chair of Research and Director of the National Palliative Care Research Center. "Our mission is to improve the quality of life and independence for the millions of older adults living with serious and advanced illnesses through clinical, behavioral, and health services research."

Mount Sinai has long been at the forefront of bridging the interdisciplinary specialties of geriatrics and palliative care by establishing a model for new and innovative areas of research. Traditionally, those areas have not been well addressed by either of these two specialties. Programs with successful track records in geriatric research training have typically not focused on palliative care, and palliative care fellowship programs have focused primarily on clinical training. Mount Sinai's OAIC grant will provide an infrastructure with which to develop new research and investigators in palliative care, and develop the instruments, designs, and analytic methods necessary to conduct this research.

## PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

### Medical Home Designation

Mount Sinai's outpatient practice, which serves patients with geriatric and/or palliative care needs, recently received accreditation as a Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

"This is a model of care that strengthens the clinician-patient relationship leading to a safer, higher quality of care, more empowered patients, and a renewal of the patient-provider relationship," says Audrey Chun, MD, Director of Mount Sinai's Coffey Geriatrics Practice at The Martha Stewart Center for Living. "Each patient has a relationship with a primary care physician who leads a team that takes collective responsibility for patient care." This model of care also takes advantage of the latest information technology to prescribe, communicate, track results, and monitor performance.



Audrey Chun, MD, left, with a patient.

## PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

### Caring for the Whole Person



Diane E. Meier, MD

Palliative care is medical care focused on maximizing the quality of life for patients and their families through attention to pain and symptoms, good communication about treatment options and achievable goals for medical care, and support and continuity of care throughout an illness and across care settings.

"Through our Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute and Center to Advance Palliative Care ([www.CAPC.org](http://www.CAPC.org)), Mount Sinai has played a leadership role in improving the quality of care for patients facing serious illnesses," says Diane E. Meier, MD, Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute and the Center to Advance Palliative Care. "We've educated thousands of doctors and nurses, and provided training to health care institutions around the country in the basic leadership and business skills necessary

to establish and sustain a high-quality palliative care clinical service."

We are working toward the integration of palliative care into the genome of American medicine through policy, research, training, and regulatory levers so that it is a mandatory and regulated component of our health care system.

In June, we opened the Wiener Family Palliative Care Unit, the first unit of its kind in Manhattan to provide compassionate, high-quality care to hospitalized patients facing serious illness. The unit's multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplain, doula (volunteer companions), and massage and yoga therapists provide patients with expert treatment, and emotional, spiritual, and practical support. Their goal is to help patients stay in control of their care in the hospital, and develop an effective plan for when they leave.