Circle of Life Award

Citation of Honor
Summa’s Palliative Care and Hospice Services

The AHA Circle of Life Award honors innovative programs in palliative and end-of-life care. The Circle of Life Award winners for 2010 have been announced. The Circle of Life Award, awarded by the American Hospital Association (AHA) and supported by the California Healthcare Foundation and the Archstone Foundation, honors innovation in palliative and end-of-life care. We are very proud that Summa’s Palliative Care and Hospice Services were presented with a Citation of Honor.

The Circle of Life Award honors programs that:
• are striving to equitably provide effective, patient-centered, timely, safe, and efficient palliative and end-of-life care.
• are striving to implement the domains of the National Consensus Project Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care and the corresponding preferred practices identified by the National Quality Forum.
• show innovation and serve as models for the field particularly in moving palliative care upstream.
• support hospitals’ and health organizations’ efforts to improve palliative and end-of-life care.
• build awareness of the importance of serving people with life-limiting illnesses throughout the continuum of their illness and supporting those close to them
• are actively working with other health care organizations and the community across the continuum of care

All organizations or groups in the United States that provide palliative or end-of-life care are eligible for the award.

Steven Radwany, M.D., is the Medical Director of Summa Health System’s Palliative Care and Hospice Services. SPCHS’s palliative care fellowship (which takes three fellows per year) is just one aspect of what Dr. Radwany describes as “our deep commitment to education in hospice and palliative care.” The curriculum includes rotations in inpatient palliative care, pediatric palliative care, geriatric medicine, outpatient oncology, and research. Based in Summa’s busiest teaching hospital in Akron, the palliative care unit and hospice program now provides clinical rotations for more than 60 residents, medical
students, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, visiting scholars, and fellows each year. Program leaders also helped set up a mandatory four-year hospice/palliative medicine curriculum at the medical school. Summa’s Health Services Research and Education Institute is engaged in cutting-edge palliative care and geriatric research on a wide range of issues, including home based palliative care, cross-cultural attitudes on end-of-life care, family meetings, interactions between ER and palliative care consultations, and the cost-effectiveness of hospice and palliative care.

Spread across a six-hospital integrated delivery system, SPCHS includes a hospice program, palliative care consult service, inpatient acute palliative care unit, and hospice and palliative care services (including PC consults) in 22 extended-care facilities. Each hospital works from the core model of the system’s palliative and hospice care program, but “our hospitals serve a wide diversity of patients,” Radwany says. “Each of our hospitals serves a different population and each has its own medical culture. They need to be able to build their own programs from the ground up so that they can meet the needs that exist, not the needs that we presume.” SPCHS also recently initiated an African-American community outreach program to identify influential individuals in the African-American and faith-based communities who can help educate their members about SPCHS’s services. One service available to all hospice and palliative care patients is Summa’s massotherapy program. Initially funded in 2002 through a United Way grant, the massotherapy program now has two full-time and four part-time massage therapists. In 2009, the program funded 3,200 patient visits, all at no extra charge to the patients or their families. “Massage therapy can be so helpful for managing both pain and anxiety,” says SPCHS director Kim Kousaie, BSN, CHPN. “This is a vital part of our program.”