

Seasons

A Semi-Annual Hospice and Acute Palliative Care Services Newsletter

SPRING 2009

Q & A with Dr. Walt Ferris

By Mary Ann Gill, RN, MA and Lauren Langenderfer, MSFCS

We welcomed Dr. Walt Ferris as our home visiting physician to Mount Carmel Hospice and Palliative Care Services in September 2008. Dr. Ferris comes to Mount Carmel with much experience in hospice care and palliative medicine from his previous venture with Hospice of Dayton and also experience in Medical Education and Family Medicine practice. Having attended The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Dr. Ferris and his wife, Lynn, moved back to Columbus to join our team, which also puts them in closer touch with two of their children. Altogether, they have five children and two grandchildren.

During our interview, we asked Dr. Ferris pertinent questions regarding his viewpoint and how that will influence his role within Mount Carmel's Hospice and Palliative Care programs.

Q. What do you believe is the value of a hospice home visiting physician?

A. There are many ways in which a home visiting physician is valuable to a hospice program. Even though our hospice nurses do an excellent job to manage symptoms, patients do respond favorably to having a doctor come into their home. Patients value the doctor-patient relationship and when they are too ill to visit their primary physician, they can feel isolated. Often times, the home visiting physician can be the eyes and ears for an attending physician who has not had contact with their patient in an extended period of time.

Q. How does your role as a home visiting physician benefit the attending physician?

A. I view my role as a home visiting physician as a collaborative relationship with the patient's attending physician. I am able to keep the attending physician feeling connected to their patient.



Q. In the future, do you see the value of extending the home visiting physician to nursing homes?

A. Definitely... yes! Although each extended care facility has its own medical director, they are often overseeing many patients and cannot always give as much time to a hospice patient as we would like them to. Having a home visiting physician integrated into the nursing home would allow me to work with the medical director to manage the end-of-life issues of our patients.

Q. What do you see as your role within the palliative care program?

A. My main responsibility within the palliative care program is to help the family's transition from curative care to palliation. This is often an abrupt transition for families and I try to make this as smooth of a change as possible.

Q. How does your background in Family Systems Theory assist you in your work here at Mount Carmel?

A. I am able to take a systemic view of illness within a family, understanding the context of the illness in association with who the patient is as a unique individual. Family therapy teaches you how to manage difficult family interactions, which allows me to better help the families make the necessary changes for their loved one's medical care.

Evergreen Support Group

The Evergreen support group is a family-focused support group for children ages six through high school and the adults who love them. After a pizza supper, children attend a group with others their age, and adults attend their own group on the same night. Trained volunteers are the driving force behind Evergreen, and there is strong clinical supervision by licensed professionals. If you are interested in volunteering in Evergreen, call Mount Carmel Hospice, 614-234-0200.

They Call It Puppy Love

Some of the most dedicated and hard-working volunteers serving Hospice and Palliative Care are not necessarily human. In 2004, Betsy Queen, The Mount Carmel Hospice/ Palliative Care Volunteer Manager, started a special dog therapy program, where dogs, accompanied by their owners, visit hospice patients, both in the home and on the Palliative Care Units. These animals and their owners share their special brand of “puppy love” with patients in need of comfort.



“My husband asked for a therapy dog who liked to be loved,” said Emmy Camp. Mrs. Camp explained that even though Sampson and his owner Amy Ridgley only had time enough to make three visits her husband Bill Camp really enjoyed when the golden retriever came to their home.

The dogs’ handlers give a great deal of time to support hospice and palliative care programs even before the first patient visit. The dogs are basic obedience trained and temperament-tested by a national therapy dog organization. For their part of the preparation, the owners complete hospice training. Both members of the therapy dog team are highly specialized volunteers. They go beyond being “nice” people with “nice” dogs. While the dogs behave instinctively and give love to those who need it, the handlers must learn when to be just the person at the end of the lease and let their animals set the visit’s pace.

However, the owners feel the benefits of hospice volunteering with their dogs far outweigh any sacrifice they might experience in keeping their dogs “visit ready.” Susan Busch believes in giving the patients and their families an outlet for their stress during this very difficult time. “Watching people have an opportunity to let their guard down because of the dogs is an experience like nothing else,” she said.

Amy Ridgley and her golden retriever Sampson have made picture-perfect hospice visits. A request came from the admissions nurse for a therapy dog to visit a patient who had relocated to Central Ohio after Hurricane Katrina. The patient had lost track of her two goldens after she and her husband handed them over to be fostered while they lived in a shelter after the storm. The Ridgley duo visited the couple and many other family members who were also invited into the home on Sampson’s special days. The young niece of the patient would draw pictures for Sampson to take home with him. “Momma Ridgley” still hangs those crayon masterpieces on her refrigerator. “Amy and Sampson preformed true hospice service. They served the patient and the entire family. That is a very important hospice philosophy,” explained Queen.

Another volunteer, Susan Tanzillo dresses her black lab, Ditka, in costumes for his volunteer visits with hospice and palliative care patients. On any given day, Ditka may be Uncle Sam, a butterfly, a construction worker (complete with tool belt), or a police officer. Tanzillo says as soon as Ditka puts on his costume, he is the most gentle and kind dog anxious to get to his patient.

Once, in the elevator on the way up to the Palliative Care floor at Mount Carmel East, Team Tanzillo encountered a man whose wife had Alzheimer’s disease. The man said he and his

wife owned a black lab years ago and asked if they would mind visiting with her. “As soon as we walked into this woman’s room, she yelled ‘Zelda, Zelda, you brought Zelda!’ The woman thought it was her own lab, who had died many years before. She fell asleep cuddling with Ditka while her husband cried softly, so grateful for the happiness the dog brought his wife,” Tanzillo recalled.

The dog therapy program at Mount Carmel has impacted many patients and their families during a time when something small, such as a dog’s love, can be enormously comforting. There are many more ways in which someone can share their own gifts with the hospice program. Queen explained that there is a need for people with all kinds of talents to serve in the volunteer program. “We have so many areas in which someone can serve — the home, hospital, or nursing home. All talents are significant because they are given to us to share in service with others. This is especially important for potential volunteer members to remember.” For more information about volunteering with The Mount Carmel Hospice, contact Betsy Queen, at 234-0264.



Getting a good-bye hug from Patient Care Assistant Maria Castro, Killian, Domanik says his final farewells to the associates of St. Ann’s Palliative Care Unit. After several years in the show ring then three and a half years as volunteers, Gerry Domanik and his Irish Setter retire. The Palliative Care staff hosted a celebration to thank Killian and his owner-handler for the unselfish time they gave to all the patients, families, and associates of St. Ann’s third floor north.



Well known by the employees at Mount Carmel East, Susan Tanzillo and her Labrador Retriever Ditka are stopped outside the elevator by associates wanting the special kind of care that only a dog can deliver. “The Great Tanzillo,” complete with a rabbit in his hat, visited the patients and families on East’s Palliative Care Unit. After doing rounds, Susan often treats Ditka to an ice cream from the cafeteria.

Volunteer Opportunities

Mount Carmel Hospice and the Acute Palliative Care Services are looking for people who have kind hearts and a willingness to serve their communities in various settings. If you have a genuine desire to support patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families... if you can offer kindness and assurance... if you are able to listen with sensitivity and respect, Mount Carmel Hospice is looking for you to join their direct service volunteer program. Volunteer opportunities are available for people who would like to support excellent end-of-life care by donating their time in the Hospice administrative offices. Please call Betsy at 614-234-0264.



As an honored guest, Bette Tyznik is recognized for 20 years service to Mount Carmel Hospice at the November Volunteer Appreciation Dinner held at Mount Carmel East’s Siegel Center. It all began with her initial interview in April 1988. Mrs. Tyznik started her hospice work as a direct service volunteer visiting patient and families wherever they called home. Presently, Bette does the family mailings for the hospice bereavement component.

The Continuum of Care Through the Eyes of the Brunetto Family

By Lori Yosick, LISW, Interim Executive Director, Palliative Care

Joe Brunetto was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer in March of 2005. Following two and a half years of treatments, consultations, surgeries and chemotherapy, he and his family knew “it was a matter of time” until this cancer would end his life, but they didn’t talk about it.

“Death is a scary thing. Hospice can be a scary term,” recalls Michelle Brunetto, Joe’s wife. “When Dr. Siegel recommended Joe move to the Palliative Care Unit (at Mount Carmel West), we thought he was going there to die.”

It wasn’t until Dr. Siegel and Karen Droll (Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse Clinician) explained Palliative Care Services as care to manage pain, support the family, and help patients feel more comfortable so they can return home. The Palliative Care team also talked about keeping Joe around his family and being able to have a high quality of life in the time remaining. The family now understood this wasn’t about dying.

“When the hospital staff told us about hospice, they said it was a wonderful program to give us support at home and provide that quality of life. The hospice team that came to our house was great. I have never met a nicer bunch of people. I don’t know how I would have done it without them. Hospice helped Joe not worry about us, and we didn’t worry about Joe.”

Joey Brunetto, Joe’s son, agreed, “Hospice staff helped mediate our questions and discussions.” Family members had differing ideas about what was happening and what his father needed and wanted. The team came in and explained, in easy to understand terms, what was going on in Joe’s physical body and what the family could do to support him and each other.

Michelle explained, “I was so naïve about finances and insurances. I had no idea that our insurance would pay for all the care and equipment.” Many patients and families do not have insurance or resources to pay for their care to keep the patient at home. Mount Carmel Hospice does not deny anyone service based on ability to pay and has charity care and emergency assistance for low income patients seeking services.



Explaining the impact that hospice services had on her family, Michelle Brunetto talks about what was important to her husband Joe in his final days.



Joe Brunetto

was close to dying,” Michelle said, “but for his sake, we were so glad he was at home.”

Joe died on March 26, 2008. His family received information and phone calls from hospice bereavement staff to offer support. There are support groups, individual counseling sessions and people to talk to when the loss and memories are too great to deal with alone. They now know they can talk about their loss and it will help them remember Joe as someone who “enjoyed his life to the end.”

Michelle concluded, “Can’t we change the name from hospice, which sounds negative, to something more about hope and enjoying the time you have left? You have to get the word out about hospice. It offers so much. How do people know what they need?” So, the Brunetto’s are talking about it. They have agreed to become our Ambassadors in the community, spreading the word about Hospice and Palliative Care.

How You Can Support Hospice and Palliative Care

Mount Carmel Hospice and Palliative Care provide service regardless of insurance or ability to pay. Many have asked how they may help us continue to provide Hospice and Palliative Care, grief counseling and support to others that need it.

If you wish to support these services, the following are some ways others have helped:

- Talk about hospice. Your words of praise for the program will help others view hospice care as part of the natural continuum of health care services. **It is about helping others LIVE until they die.**
- Tell your friends about Mount Carmel Hospice -- Hospice care is available to them or a loved one if needed. All they have to do is call our office (614)234-0200.
- Tell your doctor about your satisfaction with Hospice and Palliative Care so they will refer other patients and families to our program. Remember each patient’s doctor can become part of the care team.
- Invite Hospice team members to speak at civic groups, business meetings, classes and church groups. You may do this by calling the office and asking for the Speaker’s Bureau.
- Volunteer — the home Hospice program, inpatient Palliative Care Units, Hospice office, or our Evergreen Program.
- Ask that memorial contributions come to Hospice and Palliative Care or make a donation to honor someone special.

Thank you!

Hospice and Palliative Care Thank Mary Ann Gill for 32 Years of Service to Mount Carmel Health System



Mary Ann Gill, founding Director of Hospice (1985), founding Executive Director of Palliative Care (2003) retired in December 2008. Her contributions and gifts to Hospice and Palliative Care at MCHS and across the country will significantly impact care and help normalize Palliative Medicine as part of the continuum of healthcare for all.

Thanks for your dedication, service and commitment.



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