

Living with Life-Threatening Illness

MS1 Elective – 2 Credit hours – GMED705L

Course Director: Susan Tolle, MD, Professor of Medicine, Internal Medicine & Geriatrics, Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair, and Director, Center for Ethics in Health Care

Course Purpose:

This interdisciplinary course introduces fundamental knowledge, attitudes, and skills for working with patients with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Each student will be assigned to a patient with a life-threatening illness whom they will visit 5 times in the patient's home. The focus of learning for the course will be the student's ongoing relationship with this patient-teacher and his or her family. Weekly large group discussions will address patients' and families' experiences of suffering, caregiving, symptom control, death, loss and grief, and spiritual concerns. Weekly small group discussions will allow students to receive supervision from experienced clinicians and to reflect on personal reactions to their patient-teacher, and will help them integrate didactic material about life-threatening illness and palliative care with their patient visits. Course evaluation will be based on participation, attendance, and completing a short reflection paper or good-bye letter to the patient-teacher.

Reflections from past students to their patient-teachers:

"You have taught me that sometimes, the hardest thing a physician must learn to do is have the courage and humility to simply be human, vulnerable, and honest."

"I enrolled in this class because of my fear and apprehension about working with dying patients and talking about death. What I now realize is that talking about death is really just talking about life. Giving your precious time to allow me to learn from you is a gift of immeasurable magnitude."

"Your experiences and stories will help me become a better physician. My time with you will impact all my future interactions with patients and for this I am forever grateful."

"Through our conversations, I gained a rich, new perspective on the meaning and purpose of life. I was expecting to learn about despair, but instead, I learned about hope."

To hear a patient-teacher's thoughts about the course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p48GZ03zMZc&feature=youtu.be>

Course Dates:

Class meets on Thursdays from 1:00–3:00 PM; Course dates begin on September 27, 2018 - December 14, 2018

****There will be no class on 10/18 (Assessment week); 11/22 (Thanksgiving); and 12/6 (Assessment week)****

Enrollment Limit: 16 students (Course no. GMED705L)

For additional information contact:

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