

Project Title: Expanding Philanthropic Support for Palliative Care Research at the University of Pittsburgh

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Background, Significance of Project: Palliative care research has been instrumental in identifying and implementing approaches to alleviate suffering and improve delivery of serious illness care. However, two national organizations that have supported palliative care research are sunsetting in the next two years, and palliative care lacks a permanent home at the National Institutes of Health. Philanthropic support is thus critical for academic palliative research centers to (1) sustain, grow and diversify the palliative care research workforce and (2) continue to successfully address gaps in serious illness care. The Palliative Research Center (PaRC) at the University of Pittsburgh is a leading center in palliative care research, with 15 core faculty, over 100 mentees, and 34 active grants totaling >\$10 million annually. To date, >95% of our funding is from federal grants and we have not actively pursued philanthropic support for our work.

Purpose/Objectives: To identify opportunities to expand philanthropic support for palliative care research at the University of Pittsburgh.

Approach: (1) Close collaboration with Pitt Development officers; (2) Informational interviews with philanthropic and community leaders to identify shared priorities; (3) Informational interviews with academic palliative care leaders to identify successful fundraising strategies and common pitfalls; (4) Development of public-facing communication tools aligning with philanthropic goals.

Outcomes/Results to date: We have identified common misperceptions coupled with a general lack of awareness of palliative care amongst philanthropic and community leaders. In response, we have developed stories that highlight the breadth and impact of our work. We have collaborated with University development officers to initiate outreach efforts to high profile individual donors and identify potential foundation partners. For the first time, we also participated in an annual, University-affiliated day of giving, garnering individual donations to support our palliative research scholarship fund. Partnering with the clinical palliative care program, we are combining our distribution lists and developing a joint communication strategy, including a newsletter and annual donor letters.

Discussion/Conclusion/Statement of Impact: We are addressing the question of how palliative care research is communicated to the public. By developing communication tools specific to this task, we were able to focus on relevant impact areas for the communities we serve and build pathways to engagement and philanthropic support. This has the potential to increase the impact and sustainability of our work, through building new research constituencies, fundraising to support high-priority initiatives, and raising the profile of the University of Pittsburgh as a nationally-recognized center for palliative care research.