

## Eli's Hospice Insider

### Industry Notes:

#### Physicians Who Provide Spiritual Care Give Hospice a Boost

When medical teams pray with terminally ill cancer patients, they may be paving the way to hospice care -- as well as lessening aggressive interventions.

A Dana-Farber Cancer Institute study of terminally ill cancer patients found that support of patients' spiritual needs by their medical team promotes greater use of hospice care, leads to less aggressive care, and improves quality of life as patients near death, according to a release. "Recent research has shown that religion and spirituality are major sources of comfort and support for patients confronting advanced disease," says the study's senior author, **Tracy Balboni, MD, MPH**, of Dana-Farber in Boston, Mass in the release.

"Our findings indicate that patients whose spiritual needs are supported by their medical team, including doctors, nurses and chaplains, have better quality of life near death and receive less aggressive medical care at the end of life," Balboni said

When patients' spiritual needs were supported by the medical team, the patients were likely to transition to hospice care at the end of life, the study showed.

Spiritual support also reduced the risk of receiving aggressive medical interventions at the end of life also among patients relying on their religious beliefs to cope with their illness, the researchers found.

Patients who received spiritual support from their medical team also expressed a 28 percent higher level of well being than those who did not feel supported "Our findings suggest that spiritual care from the medical system has important ramifications for patients at the end of life, including helping them transition to comfort-focused care and improving their well-being near death," Balboni said in the release.

"Furthermore, they highlight the need to educate medical caregivers in being attentive to the frequent role of religion and spirituality in patients' coping with advanced illness and importance of integrating pastoral care into multidisciplinary medical teams," Balboni said The study was published by the Journal of Clinical Oncology on its Web site and later will be published in a print edition.

#### Director of Clinical Services Salaries Show Increase

2009 was a good year for hospice directors of clinical services. The national average salary for those holding this job title increased 3.10 percent, according to the 18th annual Hospice Salary & Benefits Report published by Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service (HCS). The increase represents agencies that participated in both the 2008 and 2009 compensation studies, according to a press release from the Oakland, NJ-based HCS.

The position offered a national average salary of \$78,392. And the turnover rate for clinical services decreased by 1.16 percent, from 18.10 percent in 2008 to 17.89 percent in 2009, according to the release.

The 18th annual Hospice Salary & Benefits Report was published in cooperation with the National Association for Home Care & Hospice and drew data from 495 participating hospices and hospice programs employing more than 40,000 full-time employees.

The Hospice Report may be purchased from HCS for \$250 at [www.hhcsinc.com](http://www.hhcsinc.com) or by calling (201) 405-0075.

#### Mind Falls Risk with Chronic Pain

If your patients have chronic pain, you might want to flag them for falls risk attention. Researchers are now looking at the significant role chronic pain plays in increasing risks associated with falls. A recent study, "Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain and the Occurrence of Falls in an Older Population," published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, surveyed 749 adults 70 years and older to determine whether chronic musculoskeletal pain is associated with an increased occurrence of falls among older adults living in the community.

There were 1,029 falls reported, the study notes. Among those falls, people who had two or more pain sites had higher fall rates than those that experienced no or minimal pain, according to the study's abstract notes.