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MEMORABLE LEADERS of 2011

Looking Ahead with a
Q & Quadruple A

Dr. Arvind Soni Discusses the
Prostate Screening Debate

Medical Memoirs of
Palliative Care

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Medical Memoir

Putting the 'CARE' in Palliative Care



Albert Einstein once said, "Only a life lived for others is worth living." The medical community specifically exemplifies this state of living for others; dedicating their lives to improving the quality of life, easing suffering, and caring for the patient's overall well-being with the most alacritous medicinal and technological aides available. Palliative medicine is one way in which this is modeled.

Palliative medicine or care (PM/PC) as a "whole person care" discipline is an integral fiber of medicinal practices but is somewhat new as a singular branch in the medical industry.

Dr. Jose Fernandez, MD is a Hospice and palliative care physician with the Good Shepherd Hospice serving Polk, Highland and Hardee Counties. He explains the quintessential difference between the palliative care as a discipline and as a medicine. "Palliative medicine pro-

vides both a philosophy of care and an organized, structured system of care delivery that positions the patient in the center and addresses more than just the physical aspects of the patient's disease. It gives equal weight to the emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of it. Palliative medicine focuses on these "domains" that make a person whole and is delivered by a team of professionals that include doctors, nurses, chaplains, social workers, and family members who work as a unit to provide the 'whole person care.'" In this way the palliative care physician is able to aid the primary doctor in meeting not only the physical needs of the patient, but also the unique total humanity aspect as well.

Palliative care as a branch of medicine puts physicians in the valley with their patients. Dr. Fernandez warns that there are times when the strain of PC can take its toll on

a physician and the medical personnel. "Due to the emotional burden of this specialty, burnout is always lurking around," he elaborates. "I personally try to leave my work at the work place. When I'm home I try to dedicate my time to my family, friends, music, and hobbies. Humor is a big part of me and I have found it to be appreciated even by the most delicate patients if used in moderation. Additionally I think it is very important to have a very supporting staff that can recognize the early stages of burnout in each other in order to prevent escalating levels of stress. It is essential to open up about how each team member feels in order to maintain a well functioning unit."

Through his work, though, Dr. Fer-

andez finds joy and purpose. "When I start my day with a fearful patient who at the end of the meeting feels more at peace with

himself, knowing that while we can't promise a lot of things, he can expect us to be there with him it is very fulfilling when we manage to provide peace and sense to an otherwise hectic situation. The best compliment I ever had was, "Thanks, because you were there for us."

In the work of a PM physician the only promise made is that the family and patient will not go through their journey alone. "Palliative medicine has made me a better doctor in different aspects," says Dr. Fernandez. He encourages other physicians in providing personal care to "Provide a sympathetic ear for your patients. Conversation should be 80 percent listening, 20 percent talking

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(I'm still working on that one). Apologize when you make a mistake. Make your patients laugh if it is appropriate (nothing better to break some tension). Have a firm handshake and look them in the eye and gain their trust. Don't take yourself too seriously and take care of yourself. It is very fulfilling to see how people sincerely appreciate your efforts, to ease their suffering, and truly gain [their] trust." *

CREDITS

by J.P. SMITH

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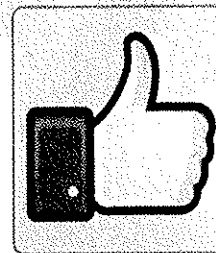
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