A Note From Stu Farber

It has been my passion over the past 20 years to educate the next generation of clinicians, especially physicians, to provide expert palliative care to seriously ill patients and their families.

Narrative medicine, patient-centered communication and strong relationship skills are at the heart of providing the highest quality of palliative care. These skills allow a clinician to understand the narrative story that patients and their families use to make meaning out of their illness experience. These narratives provide the values and goals that define quality of life for each patient and their family. Assuring that medical care maximizes the patient’s and family’s quality of life, while minimizing suffering, requires that patient and family narratives are at the center of all medical decision-making.

My and Lu’s goal for this professorship, which will be established at UW Medicine, is to support experiential, leading-edge education that promotes narrative- and patient-centered medicine based on outstanding communication and relational skills. These skills and attributes are the foundation of respectful palliative and end-of-life care. The legacy that Lu and I wish to leave is training that transforms how we care for our sickest and most vulnerable patients and families — care that respects and is based on the unique narrative of each patient and each family served.

As I look at what has been accomplished in hospice and palliative care in our region over the past 30 years, I take great pride in my contributions. This has been a long journey, and so many partners helped create the path. My foremost teachers and supporters have been the patients and families I have had the privilege to serve. Lu’s constant support, along with support from other mentors, colleagues, administrators, grantors, fellow researchers, community members, family and friends also have been important. I have been blessed to be a part of a community of visionaries who have supported these efforts.

This poem by William Stafford, written in 1998 in the last month of his life, describes eloquently the goals of palliative care and of this professorship.

The Way It Is

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn’t change. People wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to explain about the thread. But it is hard for others to see. While you hold it you can’t get lost. Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die; and you suffer and get old. Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding. You don’t ever let go of the thread.
Creating the Stuart J. Farber, M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education in the Department of Family Medicine

The importance of palliative care — and palliative care education — has never been greater. Due to the progress that medicine has made in extending our lives, more people are enduring lengthy illnesses and prolonged deaths as a result of chronic and progressive disease. As the population ages, the challenge of caring for these people will increase. While interest in the field of palliative care has grown over the past 15 years, palliative care education is in its infancy for both new and experienced medical professionals.

In creating the Stuart J. Farber, M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education, the Farber family's intention is to improve both the quality and quantity of palliative care education for current medical students and trainees — as well as for practicing clinicians. Ultimately, we want all clinicians to be skilled in providing expert and compassionate end-of-life care to patients and their families. We also want to increase the number of clinicians who choose to specialize in palliative care in communities across the Northwest.

The professorship will provide funding in perpetuity to the Department of Family Medicine to support a distinguished family physician with an exemplary record of accomplishment in palliative and end-of-life care — one who also has demonstrated a deep commitment to educating the next generation of physicians and other healthcare providers on communicating with seriously ill patients and families.

Please join us in establishing the Stuart J. Farber M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education. This permanent faculty position will honor Stu Farber's life-long contributions as a pioneer in palliative care as a specialty locally, regionally and nationally. It also will strengthen the work of the University of Washington's Department of Family Medicine and the Palliative Care Center of Excellence in providing education in the field of palliative care.

The Department of Family Medicine and the UW Palliative Care Center of Excellence

Family medicine has always been about continuity of care — from birth through death. Providing end-of-life care for patients and their families is a traditional and central responsibility of the family physician, one whose roots extend back hundreds of years. Educating students and training residents and fellows on this important topic has been a part of the educational mission of the Department of Family Medicine since its founding. With the increased need for physicians skilled in palliative care — combined with the UW's commitment to this important field, the Department of Family Medicine will establish a Palliative Care Section in 2014.

Stuart J. Farber, M.D.: A Life Committed to Patient-Centered Care

Stu Farber is a UW Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and director of the Palliative Care Service at UW Medical Center. He also serves as the director of clinical operations for the UW Palliative Care Center of Excellence.

Stu received his medical degree from the UW School of Medicine in 1974 and completed residency training in family medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin. He was a scholar for the Project on Death in America, served as a hospice medical director for more than 20 years and has extensive experience in long-term care.

After 17 years of practicing family medicine in an urban community, Stu returned to academic medicine in 1998 to pursue education and research in end-of-life care. He has been at the forefront of UW Medicine's efforts to educate the next generation of clinicians to provide excellent palliative care to seriously ill patients and their families. His research explores the effectiveness of palliative care educational approaches, including the narrative model and the benefits of earlier palliative care interventions for patients, families, clinicians and healthcare organizations.
Learning from the pioneers

Although palliative care has been part of family medicine since our specialty was created more than 40 years ago, Stu Farber pushed the boundaries of the discipline. Almost 25 years ago, he recognized the need for some family physicians to go beyond the basic end-of-life care common to our discipline. Stu saw a need for experts and for teachers. He traveled widely and worked with the international pioneers founding the hospice and palliative care movements.

Stu brought his expertise back to the Northwest and began practicing and teaching the new skills that he had learned. In 1998, he became a regular faculty member in family medicine at UW Medicine and began teaching medical students and residents about palliative care. With a curricular change in 2002, the topic became a required subject of study for all UW medical students, with Stu as the head instructor.

The sub-specialty and the center

In 2006, the American Board of Medical Specialties recognized palliative care as an official sub-specialty, with the American Board of Family Medicine as one of its sponsors. Shortly thereafter, Stu became one of the first board-certified family physician palliative care specialists in the Northwest. This led to development of specialty training in palliative care at UW Medicine, with Stu as a key supporter.

Another major milestone in palliative care and palliative care education was achieved in 2012, when UW Medicine established the UW Palliative Care Center of Excellence. Its goal is to give every patient access to healthcare focused on relief from symptoms, pain and stress, and on improving quality of life. One of the center’s key initiatives is to educate professionals for a new kind of palliative care. Other goals include attracting compassionate and committed students into the field and providing specialized training to practicing physicians.

The Farber Professorship

Thanks to the traditional role that high-quality end-of-life care plays in general practice and family medicine, thanks to UW Medicine’s investment in palliative care, and thanks to Stu Farber’s commitment and dedication, the Department of Family Medicine is a leader in palliative care education. With Stu’s leadership, we have assured that all UW School of Medicine graduates have some training in palliative care, with robust programs for those with a special interest in the field. And with the support the Farber Professorship will offer, we will be able to teach and train even more learners in these critically important skills.

The Stuart J. Farber M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education will honor two outstanding educators and bring greater visibility to the growing importance of the field of palliative care. It also will highlight important work in this field, conducted by the Department of Family Medicine and the Palliative Care Center for Excellence.
The Plan for Creating the Professorship
Stu and Lu Farber have made a generous lead gift to initiate the creation of the Stuart J. Farber, M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education. We invite individuals and organizations that share the Farbers’ commitment to palliative care education to join us in the effort. The minimum needed to establish the endowed professorship is $500,000.

Investing in our faculty
We appreciate your interest in the field of palliative care, and we respectfully request that you join us in honoring the lives and work of Stu and Lu Farber by making a gift to the Farber Professorship.

Your contribution will be an important investment in physician training and in the care these physicians provide our families and our communities. It also will underscore the importance of palliative care education, inspiring students and healthcare providers in the compassionate tradition of caring for patients through the entire lifespan.

For more information
If you would like to learn more about the Stuart J. Farber, M.D., and Annalu Farber Endowed Professorship in Palliative Care Education, please contact Caroline Anderson, assistant vice president for advancement, at 206.221.2899 or cmanders@uw.edu.
Thank you for your consideration.

Make A Donation