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Innovation meets future demands: a novel approach to fellowship training in hospice and palliative medicine

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Background: North Shore University Hospital, member of the Northwell Health System, has a growing Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship training program. Established in 2007 and accredited in 2009 the program presently spans three major hospitals and is approved for six fellows.

As the number of people with serious medical illness increases, the need for hospice and palliative medicine trained physicians increases in parallel. Additionally, providers can no longer sit for the certification exam using verification of clinical experience. There are providers who wish to complete fellowship training but face hardships, financial or otherwise, presenting a barrier to pursuing a full-time program.

The language of the ACGME requirements for this fellowship has changed. *Int.C. A fellowship program in hospice and palliative medicine must consist of 12 months of education in the subspecialty. (Core)*¹* Review of the accompanying FAQs shows that the RRC allows HPM fellowship programs the flexibility to accept fellows with the expectation of completing the program on a part-time basis over the course of 24-36 months.²

Current State of Part-time Training HPM

Discipline	Outcome
Psychiatry	Yes, 24 month max to completion
Anesthesiology	Yes, by request and approval of credentialing , 24 month max to completion
Family Medicine	Yes, by request and approval of the ABFM
Pediatrics	Yes, 24 month max to completion
Internal Medicine	Yes, 4 week block minimum, by request and approval of the ABIM, 24 month max
Radiation Oncology	To be determined
Emergency Medicine	Yes
Obstetrics and Gynecology	To be determined
Physical Medicine	Yes
Surgery	No
Radiology	To be determined

Method: The division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine at North Shore-LIJ Health System is piloting a part-time fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine which commenced July, 2015. Our candidates were carefully chosen and were willing to function as one fellow, over two years. Their primary boards were contacted and they agreed in writing to allow entrance to the certifying exam upon successful completion of all program requirements over a 24 month period. Each candidate has expressed a commitment to providing palliative care in their practice as a career goal.

Conclusion: We anticipate this will be a viable alternative to full time training, allowing more providers the acquisition of subspecialty competencies and board certification.

¹https://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/Portals/0/PFAssets/ProgramRequirements/540_hospice_and_palliative_medicine_2016_1-YR.pdf (accessed 3/1-5/4/2015)

² https://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/Portals/0/PDFs/FAQ/540_hospice_and_palliative_medicine_FAQs_07012015.pdf (accessed 3/1-5/4/2015)