

# UAB Department of Medicine Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care

## *Palliative Psychology & Psycho-Oncology Rotation*

The UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care is dedicated to providing compassionate clinical care to patients and families facing serious and/or terminal illnesses, training talented professionals in palliative and supportive care and supporting research focused on how to best care for patients with life-threatening illness. The Palliative and Comfort Care Unit and Supportive Care and Survivorship Clinic employs a holistic care approach and musters an interdisciplinary team of physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychologists, social workers, physical therapists, nutritionists, music therapists, massage therapists, and pet therapists to meet each patient's individual care needs with a focus on decreasing symptom burdens and enhancing coping and quality of life is delivered at any stage of the treatment process.

### **Rotation Site:**

Interns will have the opportunity to be trained at Palliative and Comfort Care Unit (inpatient) and Supportive and Survivorship Care Clinic (outpatient), UAB Hospital (consult services)

### **Preceptors:**

Sylvia Huang, PhD [chuang@uabmc.edu](mailto:chuang@uabmc.edu), Diane Tucker, PhD [dtucker@uab.edu](mailto:dtucker@uab.edu)

### **Rotation Offered: *Minor***

This is a minor rotation and a minimum of 12 to 16 hours per week is required. Some flexibility in the intern's schedule can be accommodated. Palliative Care IDT meetings are held weekly from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm on Thursday mornings. Supportive Care IDT meetings are held from 7:00 to 8:00 am every 2nd Wednesday of each month.

### **Patient Characteristics:**

Population includes men and female adult patients diagnosed with a wide variety of chronic and serious medical conditions. Approximately 70 percent of the patients have cancer; others present with lung and heart diseases and other life-threatening conditions such as ALS and cystic fibrosis. Many of the patients present with complicated co-morbidity. Patients generally need help address symptoms, set goals for care to enhance quality of life and decrease psychosocial distress and symptom burden, obtain support for both patients and their loved ones as they cope with challenging medical conditions and related emotional stress. Bereavement and grief support is often provided to patients and family members dealing with life transitions and/or end-of-life issues. Common mental health diagnostic categories presented include depression, anxiety, insomnia, PTSD, chronic pain, and chemotherapy-induced cognitive impairments.

### **Distribution of Clinical Activities:**

As part of this rotation, Interns can expect to spend 60% of their time delivering intervention (individual, couple, and family therapy) and consult services, 10% performing assessments, 10% writing, 10% at seminars and/or grand rounds, and 15% in supervision.

### **Assessment Characteristics:**

Assessments most often include emotional status, cognitive function, and symptom burden screenings, and clinical interviews.

### **Intervention Characteristics:**

Psychological interventions play a powerful role in enabling patients to successfully cope with life threatening diagnosis, treatment, and enhance overall functioning as they transition into palliative and survivorship care. Interns will learn to deliver evidence-based intervention to help patients reduce stress and anxiety, improve their social adjustment, promote change to positive health behaviors, reduce symptoms burdens, improve health outcomes and quality of life, and provide bereavement assessment and support. Intervention modality may involve supportive contact, psychoeducation, psychotherapy and behavioral interventions (individual and/or family), and support groups. Interns will learn to collaborate with treatment team members to provide integrative care across the palliative care continuum via in-person and telemedicine visits.