Care of the Seriously ill – OE 907

Brief description (200 words or less of course details):

The main goal of this elective is to increase the level of both comfort and sensitivity with which students will approach caring for patients at the end of life. To stimulate the students’ reflections on their own mortality and enhance their self-awareness of how it influences their interactions with the very ill.

Caring for the Seriously ill utilizes several components to teaching this material:

1. Whole group exercises: 6 or 7 of these are held on Tuesday evenings (5:30 to 7:00 p.m.) spread over a 16-week period between mid-January and late April. The sessions may comprise panel discussions, didactic presentations, or interactive exercises. Faculty, guest experts, patients, and patients' family members often participate. Topics typically include: Bereavement, Breaking Bad News, Childhood Death and Dying, Advance Directives, Hospice and Palliative Care, Practical Aspects of Managing a Patient’s Death, and A Clinician's Overview of Death and Dying.

2. Hospice shadowing: students take turns accompanying a hospice nurse for a half-day on his/her visits to patients in their homes.

3. Small-group discussions may occasionally be offered to allow further discussion of material covered in large-group sessions.

4. Readings relevant to the content of each Whole-Group session are distributed (by e-mail) in advance of that session.

Semester offered: Spring

Registration information: The course is open to interested first- and second-year medical and GSN students. There is a total cap of 50 students, and enrollment is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Requirements for credit: The course is offered on a credit/No credit system. To qualify for Credit, students must satisfy the following requirements:

1. No more than 2 absences from whole-group sessions.

2. Fulfill the hospice shadowing assignment; students with equivalent personal experience may be excused from this requirement at the discretion of the Course Directors.

3. At the end of the course, students must submit a reflective essay on a theme relevant to the Course, eg, a personal experience with a death or serious illness; feelings stimulated by one or more of the sessions; a brief review of relevant outside reading; thoughts on death. The piece must be submitted within 10 days of the last whole-group session.

4. Students must complete a course evaluation form at the conclusion of the last session.

Contact information (student and faculty leaders):

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Offered in this academic year: YES