



# INTERNATIONAL PALLIATIVE MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The International Palliative Medicine Fellowship Program (IPMF) at The Institute for Palliative Medicine (IPM) enables physicians from outside North America to receive specialist-level training at a leading palliative care education and research facility without having to leave their home institutions for extended periods of time.

## Overview

Physicians who are already providing palliative care in their own country are invited to enroll in the IPMF and visit San Diego 6 times to train at IPM for 5 weeks each visit over 30-48 months, based on competencies demonstrated, scheduling, etc. Through a rigorous program of classroom instruction and bedside training, participants develop:

- 1) Specialist-level palliative medicine expertise based on U.S. Hospice and Palliative Medicine competencies
- 2) Teaching and presentation skills with the ability to give effective feedback
- 3) Goal setting skills for personal and program growth
- 4) Strategies to build a palliative care program in their home institution
- 5) Data collection/quality improvement skills
- 6) Self-care/burnout avoidance practices

During the intervening months, it is expected that the fellow will be leading an interdisciplinary palliative care team in her/his home institution, caring for patients routinely, and further expanding the palliative care program. IPM faculty will aim to visit the fellow's home institution 2 times during the 30-48 months of the training program to provide in-country mentorship and participate in national education and advocacy initiatives. By graduation, fellows will have 6-8 months of mentorship from IPM faculty. Completion of the IPMF Program is based on demonstrated competencies, not on the number of visits, or time spent in training.

Example schedule:

Fellow Training in San Diego	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
6 weeks/visit																																						
Training blocks																																						
IPM faculty In-Country Visit																																						
1-2 weeks/visit																																						

## Fellow Selection

While the International Palliative Medicine Fellowship Program is based on U.S. Hospice and Palliative Medicine competencies, it is customized for international physicians. To qualify, physicians must be from healthcare systems within countries that have demonstrated a commitment to building palliative care capacity, to provide education in the core competencies of palliative care, and that have partnered with the IPM International Programs to accomplish these goals.

*“During the first week [in the classroom] I felt that I will not benefit... and it will not make any change in my practice.*

*“But, after starting practical session a huge and unexpected change happened... I will make every effort I have to practice this knowledge in my real life...*

*“My experience with my fellowship was really exceptional. Not only was I touched with the high level of education, training, unlimited resources and mentors, but watching everybody in the team striving to relieve suffering from the patient and family was really impressive...*

*“I truly believe that palliative care is not limited to terminally ill patients, or even for sick person; but also it is the answer for all people on earth, for nations as a language to replace the language of conflict between nations we hear every day in the media.”*

Mohammad Bushnaq  
Graduate from Jordan

## **Financial Arrangements:**

*Financial arrangements for this fellowship program are negotiated with each country and host institution individually.*

## **Graduates:**

*Mohammad Bushnaq,  
Jordan  
Hasan Abbas,  
Jordan  
Mohammad Shtiat, Jordan  
Urška Lunder,  
Slovenia  
Ganaa Tserendorj,  
Mongolia  
Ioseb Abesadze,  
Georgia  
Tamari Rukhadze, Georgia  
Odontuya Davaasuren,  
Mongolia  
Quach Thanh Khanh,  
Vietnam  
Do Trong Thuy,  
Vietnam  
Agnes Calsina,  
Spain*

## **Current Fellows:**

*Eddie Mwebesa,  
Uganda  
Lilian Hidalgo,  
Peru  
Mohamed Hablas,  
Egypt  
Paul Mmbando,  
Tanzania  
Sarah Urasa,  
Tanzania  
Mariam Velijanashvili,  
Georgia  
Tamari Gotsiridze,  
Georgia  
Giorgi Metivishvili,  
Georgia  
Mariarita Pepe Milizia,  
Italy  
Mawuli Gyakobo,  
Ghana  
Edwina Addo,  
Ghana  
Marcos Borges,  
Brazil  
Omar Gomezese,  
Colombia  
Kyriakos Stylianides,  
Cyprus  
Sylvia Lazaridou,  
Cyprus*

*Fellows are typically selected based on their level of interest, as demonstrated by their work with IPM faculty during in-country training programs, the recommendations of medical leaders in their countries, and the assessment of the IPM faculty team.*

## **Fellow requirements:**

- 1) Fluency in English as determined by IPMF faculty during phone or in person interview*
- 2) Active clinical practice seeing palliative care patients and families*
- 3) Dedication to building a palliative care program in his/her home institution*
- 4) Participation in patient data collection and other information as requested*
- 5) Commitment to personal education and education of others, as demonstrated by ongoing self-directed learning and participation in palliative care teaching after each trip to San Diego in his/her home institution, as well as other teaching opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally;*
- 6) Support from their home institution/employer as listed below.*

## **Institutional requirements:**

*To participate in the fellowship, candidates must have the support of their home institutions. This is essential for the fellow to be successful. Institutions can expect to benefit from partnering with The Institute for Palliative Medicine at San Diego Hospice in the creation of an International Palliative Medicine Fellow through that fellow's new expertise in palliative patient and family care, his/her palliative care education for staff members, and an increase of palliative care capacity in the organization. Many palliative medicine consultants spend 60% of their time in clinical practice, and 40% of their time in administration and teaching. This allows them to provide patient care, while building program, educating, and sharing their expertise. It is recommended that participants in the IPMF Program have the same opportunity to maximize the benefit they bring to their organization and community.*

*The IPM costs for running this program are funded by a National Cancer Institute grant (1R25 CA134309-01A2). In order to participate in this education and research initiative, each fellow and institution will commit to:*

- 1) Supporting the fellow's participation, as well as the fellow's salary and related benefits in full, including the time when the fellow is in San Diego (2 visits annually of 5 weeks in duration, approximately 6-8 months apart)*
- 2) Providing the opportunity for the fellow to working in palliative care at home*
- 3) Enhancing the palliative care knowledge of the institution and community by supporting the fellow in teaching other healthcare providers*
- 4) Increasing palliative care capacity through program building*
- 5) Collecting and sharing data requested in a timely manner (opioid consumption data, non-identifiable patient information, etc.)*

*After completion of the fellowship, we anticipate that the fellow will be granted recognition as a specialist consultant in palliative medicine in their home institution.*

"Overall, I can say very clearly that my experience with palliative care not only changed my career, but also the way I am looking at life, the way I am communicating with people, and the way I am trying to understand others."

Mohammad Bushnaq  
Graduate from Jordan

## Training Program

**Status at IPM:** After ensuring that the potential fellow has the credentials and visa needed to qualify for visitor-based education, IPM in partnership with the San Diego County Medical Society, will arrange for the fellow to be able function like a 4<sup>th</sup>-year medical student with the ability to admit and manage patients under the direct supervision of an attending physician licensed to practice medicine in the State of California.

**Visits to San Diego:** During the training program, each fellow makes six 5-week visits to IPM at San Diego Hospice (IPMSDH). At the beginning of each visit, each fellow works with an assigned attending physician and the program director to set three attainable goals for the visit.

**First Visit:** During the first 5-week visit, each fellow will be introduced to and/or review basic palliative care concepts, which includes many of the Education in Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Oncology (EPEC™-Oncology) modules, as well as teaching sessions on goal setting, teaching and presentation skills, effective feedback, and self-care.

They will also work in one of the 12-bed inpatient units of the San Diego Hospice (SDH) Inpatient Care Center (ICC). They will interview patients, perform physical examinations and develop treatment plans under the supervision of an attending physician and in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of nurses, pharmacists, social workers, chaplains and other therapists. Fellows follow patients daily, change medications as needed, lead and participate in family conferences, inform and counsel patients and families, and provide documentation of their activities. Much of the time is spent adapting to the new organization, language and culture, and building relationships with IPMSDH staff and other palliative care trainees.

**Subsequent visits:** During subsequent visits, fellows will have the opportunity to practice and learn in a variety of settings, from experts of all disciplines, including:

**Inpatient Hospice Care:** Fellows will continue to work in one of the SDH ICC 12-bed units under the supervision of IPM faculty for at least one additional continuous month, and at the beginning of visits to reorient the fellow to U.S. medical practice, medications, and communication styles.

**Home Hospice and Long-Term Care:** Each fellow does home hospice care during one of these visits, making visits to patients at home and in long-term care facilities to interview and examine SDH patients in the company of an attending physician or another member of the interdisciplinary team. With guidance from the attending physician, the fellow participates in ongoing treatment planning.

**Consultations:** Fellows will observe palliative medicine consultation services at the University of California San Diego Medical Centers and Scripps Mercy Hospital. Each fellow rounds with the attending physician, nurse practitioner, and/or social worker to learn inpatient and outpatient palliative medicine consultation skills and etiquette, as well as to see how the patients respond to recommended therapy.

## Goals of In-Country Training:

IPM faculty will aim to visit each fellow's home institution twice during the training program to:

- assess the palliative care needs and resources of the home institution and country
- provide the fellow with bedside mentoring and structured feedback
- assist the fellow with classroom and bedside teaching of the interdisciplinary team
- assist the fellow with Morning Report, presentation of Grand Rounds, and other conferences and workshops as appropriate
- meet with leaders in the home institution, ministry of health, and other key organizations to plan for ongoing infrastructure support
- engage with the local and national media to increase public awareness of the importance of palliative care throughout the illness experience.

**Pharmacy:** Fellows spend time in the SDH pharmacy, learning about palliative medication pharmacology, medication preparation, routes of administration, and how to adapt them for use in their home institutions.

**Palliative Psychiatry:** Fellows will also spend time with IPMSDH's innovative Palliative Psychiatry program, seeing patients under the supervision of an attending psychiatrist, and focusing on management of patients with mood disorders, delirium, and dementia. They will also have the opportunity to learn about Dignity Therapy from a IPMSDH psychologist.

**Pediatric Palliative Care:** Fellows will see pediatric patients with the Children's Team, going with interdisciplinary team members and working under the supervision of an attending physician, to understand the special needs of seriously ill children and their families.

**Other Opportunities:** Fellows will spend time with a dietician who primarily sees palliative care patients to learn about this population's special needs. They will learn about grief and bereavement services for the patient and family. They will also have exposure to integrative medicine, such as harp therapy, pet therapy, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, aromatherapy, art therapy, etc.

**Ongoing Education:** While at IPM, international fellows participate in ongoing educational programs offered to U.S. fellows and interdisciplinary palliative medicine staff, including semi-weekly case-based conferences, weekly fellow seminars, weekly support groups specially tailored to international fellows, monthly morbidity and mortality conferences, and special guest presentations.

**Educational Content:** During the training period, each fellow will learn palliative medicine through a curriculum based on EPEC™-Oncology, including pain and symptom management and communication skills. Fellows will participate in 2 standardized patient exercises as part of their communications training. Throughout their fellowship training, fellows will also focus on different aspects of disease management; practical, psychological, social, and spiritual issues; end-of-life/death management; as well as loss and grief.

## Training In-Country

Between visits to IPM, fellows are expected to lead interdisciplinary palliative care teams, see palliative medicine patients routinely, teach others in their institutions and community, collect data, and build a palliative care program. (See sidebar.)

Throughout the training program, IPM faculty members provide ongoing support to fellows, as well as to administrative leaders within the home organization as needed.

### For Further Information:

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