Palliative Care Team

Mary K. Buss, MD, MPH, is Chief of the Section of Palliative Care in the Division of General Medicine at BIDMC and an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Clinically, she practices both as a medical oncologist and a palliative medicine specialist at BIDMC, where she built and now directs the outpaent palliative care clinic, staffed by a multi-disciplinary team. She is the Fellowship Program Director for BIDMC’s Hospice Palliative Care Fellowship, which opened in July 2017.

Her scholarly work focuses on improving the integration of palliative care into the care of patients with cancer. She is studying the impact of different models for delivering palliative care to patients in both the ambulatory and inpatient settings. Dr. Buss leads palliative care educational efforts for BIDMC oncology fellows. She has co-designed and co-teaches communication skills curricula for oncology fellows, pulmonary/critical care fellows, and geriatrics fellows, as well as taught communication skills at workshops across the country through Vital Talk, which develops and teaches communication courses for clinicians.

Dr. Buss graduated from Williams College with a degree in Biomedical Ethics. She completed her medical school at Georgetown University School of Medicine, followed by residency at University of Pittsburgh Medical School, Hematology-Oncology fellowship at BIDMC, and a Palliative Care fellowship at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. She and her husband are the proud parents of three beautiful girls.

Samantha Shapiro, MD, is an Attending Physician in the Section of Palliative Care at BIDMC and an Instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Clinically, she practices as an attending on the inpatient palliative care consultation service and serves as the fellowship site director at BIDMC.

Dr. Shapiro graduated from Columbia College with a degree in History. She completed her medical school at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, followed by residency and fellowship at Mount Sinai Hospital. She and her husband are the proud parents of one beautiful girl and are expecting a boy in October 2020. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking Asian food and exploring the various playgrounds in Brookline.

Anya Lepp, MD, currently practices both as palliative care specialist and a primary care physician at BIDMC. She graduated from Wesleyan University, before Harvard Medical School, completing a primary care residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and a fellowship through the Harvard Palliative Care Fellowship. She supervises BIVA HPM fellows during their BIDMC inpatient rotations and facilitates the journal club for fellowship. She spends the rest of her time chasing after her son and daughter, though is generally unsuccessful secondary to their expert use of scooters.

Cindy Lien, MD, is an Internal Medicine Hospitalist and Palliative Care Physician at BIDMC. She serves as a teaching attending and mentor to internal medicine housestaff, pain fellows, and palliative care fellows. She has been instrumental in the growth of BIDMC’s palliative care consult service and in the development of clinical rotations for internal medicine housestaff and anesthesia pain fellows. She is an active educator in palliative medicine within the Harvard
community and beyond, including national meetings of the American Academy of Hospital Medicine (AAHPM) and Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM). Her academic interests focus on quality improvement in end-of-life care. Her key projects have included a study demonstrating significant variability in opioid-infusion practices and the creation of hospital-wide comfort-care guidelines. She is currently working on a project to determine whether BIDMC primary care patients with a high mortality index can benefit from early introduction to palliative care at the time of hospitalization.

**Kathleen Lee, MD**, received her BA at Cornell University and participated in the post-baccalaureate program at the University of Pennsylvania before attending the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai. She then completed an internal medicine residency at Brown University and returned to Mt. Sinai for her HPM fellowship, staying on as faculty before being recruited to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute/Brigham and Women’s Hospital (DFCI/BWH). At DFCI/BWH, she served as Inpatient Palliative Care Consult Director and leader of the Heme-Pal initiative, building collaborative relationships between the divisions of Hematologic Malignancy and Palliative Care. Kathleen joined BIDMC in June 2020 as their first Inpatient Medical Director of the Palliative Care Section. Her academic interests center on process improvement and clinical innovation related to inpatient palliative care delivery. She also dedicates time facilitating serious illness communication skills training courses. Outside of work, Kathleen enjoys exploring the Arnold Arboretum with her husband, daughter, and two dogs.

**David Cheng, MD**, is a Palliative Care attending physician for the inpatient palliative care consult service at BIDMC and an Instructor of Medicine. He attended New York University for his undergraduate and medical school degrees, as well as NYU for his primary care internal medicine residency. David completed his hospice and palliative medicine fellowship at the Harvard Interprofessional Palliative Care fellowship at MGH/DFCI/BWH. His work-related passions include palliative care education, staff wellness/resiliency, and improving interdisciplinary team collaboration. He has extended Palliative Care education to non-physician colleagues, including nurses, social workers, chaplain interns, and medical interpreters. Outside of the hospital, David takes interest in handball, video games, and gardening.

**Joanna Sharpless, MD**, is an attending physician in BIDMC’s Section of Palliative Care and an Instructor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. She received her bachelor’s degree in English literature and her medical degree from Brown University. After graduating from residency in Family and Social Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, New York, she continued on to the Harvard Interprofessional Palliative Care fellowship at MGH and DFCI. In 2019, she joined BIDMC, where she is committed to providing outstanding palliative care to patients on the inpatient consult service and to educating future leaders in palliative care. Her other professional interests include medical writing, narrative medicine, and advocating for social justice in medicine. Outside of work, she enjoys exploring New England’s beaches, practicing her Spanish, and searching for the perfect chocolate chip cookie.

**Jeremy Whyman, MD**, is an Attending Physician in the Section of Palliative Care at BIDMC and an Instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Clinically, he attends on the inpatient palliative care consultation service, the inpatient geriatrics service, and has a robust outpatient
Geriatrics practice. He is also the associate director of Geriatric Educational Programs at BIDMC and is a preceptor in the Principles of Medicine course at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Whyman studied history with a focus on the US government’s role in atrocities internationally as an undergraduate. He completed his internship and residency at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, where he distinguished himself as a medical educator, receiving the chair’s award for excellence in teaching and education. Dr. Whyman then completed a dual fellowship at Mount Sinai Hospital in Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, where he also served as chief fellow. In his spare time, Dr. Whyman enjoys traveling with his wife, gardening, following politics, cooking, and spending time with his family.

Jonathan Yeh, MD, is a palliative care specialist at BIDMC and an Instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He graduated from Yale College with a double major in Molecular/Cellular/Developmental Biology and History of Science & Medicine. He then completed medical school, internal medicine residency, and fellowship training at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, MD. Dr. Yeh’s clinical practice focuses on using expert symptom management and honest, empathetic communication to help patients and families deal with serious illness at any stage. His research interests include improving outcomes for patients with advanced cancer, reducing burdensome transitions of care and repeat hospitalizations in older adults, and training a new groundswell of clinicians with key palliative care skills. Dr. Yeh lives with his wife in Boston, where he is an avid landscape photographer, traveler, reader, writer, and poet in his spare time.

Julie Knopp, a certified Adult Nurse Practitioner, is a clinician on the inpatient consult service. She has been a practicing nurse for over 40 years. Her background is in primary care home care as well as hospice and inpatient oncology. During the past 20 years working with the inpatient consult service, Julie has spearheaded many nursing education programs and developed and run support groups for interns and residents. She currently devotes her work time to ongoing clinical education for all staff and mentoring junior staff. Julie is married with two children who are devoted teachers. In her spare time, she writes, directs, and stars in movies, walks with friends, gardens, and has discovered bird watching.

Carol Pilgrim is a board-certified Nurse Practitioner on the inpatient consult service. Prior to becoming a nurse, she graduated from Grinnell College with a degree in political science. She went on to receive her Bachelor’s in Nursing Science from Grand View College and then, after working for several years in oncology, returned to graduate school at the University of Illinois where she received a Master of Science in Nursing. At home, Carol is the proud parent of a son in college, and during her free time she enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing.

Victoria Gurfolino, NP, PMHNP-BC, ACHPN, has worked in end of life care for the majority of her nursing career, with previous experience in the community as a hospice nurse and a hospice managing director. She initially worked as a Psych NP Liaison within a general hospital before transitioning into the specialty of Palliative Care. She serves as the outpatient Palliative Care NP, where her psychiatric background serves her well in addressing the needs of patients with concomitant anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders.
Carrie Currier, RN, graduated from Simmons College School of Nursing in 1996. Most of Carrie’s career has been spent at BIDMC serving as a bedside nurse for dialysis and ICU patients. She spent 4 years working for Care Dimensions Hospice before returning to BIDMC to work as a coordinator in the Transplant Institute. Carrie’s role as the Palliative Care Coordinator includes working with the palliative care team on a daily basis, assisting with hospital consults as well as being a liaison for the outpatient palliative care clinic.

Meg Hutchinson, MDiv, joins the team as an Inpatient Interfaith Palliative Care Chaplain on 11 Riesman. Meg received her Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology and completed her clinical residency at Brigham & Women’s hospital. Meg has been recognized by Johns Hopkins and NAMI for a decade of service to mental health advocacy as a national speaker, filmmaker, musician, and educator. She has received advanced training at the Sakya Institute for Buddhist studies since 2009 with Harvard Buddhist Chaplain Lama Migmar and incorporates mindfulness, meditation, and the arts into patient/family, and staff support. She has a special interest in family systems theory, and a dedication to trauma-informed Palliative Care.

The Rev. Katie Rimer has been director of the Department of Spiritual Care and Education since March 2014. Ordained an Episcopal priest in 2003, she studied at Harvard Divinity School and received a doctorate in Human Development and Psychology from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Katie has worked as a Palliative Care chaplain in both outpatient and inpatient settings. She just finished a book chapter about spiritual care as a central component of good Palliative Care, to be published in 2021.

Pamela Mann, MSSA, is an interfaith chaplain who provides spiritual and emotional care to patients and their families primarily in the outpatient palliative care service. Prior to her chaplaincy training, she worked in healthcare, most recently at the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, serving as Director of Programs and Rounds Training, promoting compassionate communication for clinicians, multidisciplinary caregivers, and hospital leaders. Earlier in her career, Pamela was the founding executive director of Horizons for Homeless Children (known as The Horizons Initiative) and co-director for several years. She has served as president of the Laura Mann Center for Integrative Health, a vice president of Temple Isaiah in Lexington, and is an active member of Neshama – the National Association of Jewish Chaplains. She has a Bachelor’s degree from Brown University, a Master’s degree in Social Administration from Case Western Reserve University, and served as a Peace Corps volunteer. In her spare time she enjoys running, cycling, cooking and spending time with her three grown children and her husband.

Dainora Kupcinskas, LICSW, MS, MA, is a social worker as part of the supportive staff team of the BIDMC Palliative Oncology Program based on Reisman 11. Additionally, she provides social work services in the BIDMC outpatient palliative care clinic. Dainora’s work thrives at the intersection of social work and spirituality. Dainora holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Linguistics and Psychology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, a Master of Science degree in Applied Linguistics from Georgetown University, and Master of Social Work and Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degrees from Boston College. She is a 1997-1998 Fulbright Fellow. Initially interested in language acquisition and deaf literacy, life’s turns brought Dainora to non-profit management before she discerned a calling in medical social work with a focus on spirituality. Her prior clinical settings include hospice, oncology, dialysis, short-term rehabilitation, and long-term care. She retains an affiliation with Matulaitis Rehabilitation & Skilled Care as the Director of Mission Integration. Dainora spends time in various spiritual and bookish pursuits as well as appreciating nature with her adult daughter, singing in her church choir, and volunteering for a Lithuanian cultural and religious organization.
Fellowship Alumni

Jesse Solomon, MD  
Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow 2019-2020  
My passion is to make every day the best day it can be for patients with serious illness. My interest in palliative care began during my internal medicine residency at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. I have been fortunate to pursue my Palliative Care fellowship at BIDMC and join a group of kind, motivated and thoughtful doctors, nurses, social workers, and spiritual care providers. In addition to symptom management and communication skills, I have learned the importance of being an empathic presence to my patients and having a team-oriented multi-disciplinary approach to patient care. After graduation, I will be moving home to Canada to continue my growth as a palliative care and internal medicine physician.

Natanong (Ten) Thamcharoen, MD  
Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow 2019-2020  
My parents named me “Ten” because I am the 10th grandchild on both paternal and maternal sides. I am originally from Thailand. I came to US for Internal Medicine training at Bassett Medical Center in Cooperstown, NY. I was introduced to Palliative Care medicine there and this specialty has been imprinted on my mind since. Palliative Care has changed my view of how a good doctor should be. However, I decided to do nephrology fellowship training first (also at BIDMC!) because it was my initial plan. Then I found the perfect fit between these two specialties, I realized that kidney patients do need doctors who know Palliative Care. My career focus is on applying Palliative Care practice in chronic kidney disease patients. After graduation, I am going back to my medical school in Thailand to help build a Palliative Care team there.

Current Fellows

Brian Gacioch, MD  
Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow 2020-2021  
Brian grew up in central New York State and trained as a paramedic while in college at Cornell University. After a few years as a paramedic and flight paramedic in New York, Los Angeles, and Vermont, he attended medical school at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, and then completed an Emergency Medicine residency and served as a Chief Resident at BIDMC. He served for three years on active duty in the United States Air Force, during which he further developed his interest in integrating palliative care concepts into emergency medicine. He loves spending time with his wife and dog, cooking, as well as cycling, kayaking, hiking, and skiing.

Sundeep Grandhe, MD  
Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow 2020-2021  
Before coming to BIDMC, Sunny attended medical school at Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai, India. He completed his residency in Internal Medicine at UCLA-Kern in Bakersfield, California. He served as chief of pharmacovigilance in a committee established to search for novel therapeutic non-opioid interventions including virtual reality for managing acute and chronic pain in both inpatient and outpatient settings for a variety of medical illnesses. His research interests include pain management and he is currently engaged in projects utilizing virtual reality as a therapeutic intervention for refractory symptom management. His academic interest focuses on the intersection of palliative care with hematology and oncology. He has a
great passion for providing culturally sensitive and compassionate care for medically disadvantaged and underserved populations. In his free time, he loves pursuing his wanderlust, portrait photography, and cooking worldly cuisines!

**Kirsten Engel, MD**  
**Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow 2020-2021**

After graduating from Harvard Medical School, Kirsten completed a residency in emergency medicine and a clinical research fellowship, as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars program, at the University of Michigan. In subsequent years, Kirsten’s husband had several new job opportunities which resulted in moves within the US and ultimately to his native country of Denmark. Kirsten worked as emergency medicine faculty at Yale University and Northwestern University and, most recently, held a position at Copenhagen University. She is now thrilled to have the opportunity to pursue her longstanding interest in hospice and palliative medicine. Kirsten loves spending time with her three teenagers and her husband, as well as going on long walks with their little cavapoo, Felix.