



Learning by Living: 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project

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Introduction:

The University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM) Learning by Living 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project (referred to as *Hospice Home Immersion Project*) was piloted in December, 2014. It was designed and implemented as an interprofessional experiential medical education learning model by the Director of Geriatrics Education and Research within the Medical School's Division of Geriatrics. The *48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project* is a student research experience based on the long standing and highly successful UNECOM *Learning by Living Nursing Home Immersion Project* in which medical students and other health professions students were "admitted" into nursing homes to live the life of an older nursing home resident for approximately two weeks – 24/7 (24 hours a day/7 days a week) – complete with medical diagnoses and "standard" procedures of care. However, medical students immersed in the *48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project* are active participants in patient, family, and post-mortem care during the 48 hours rather than assuming the role of "patient or resident."

Purpose:

The purpose of the *Hospice Home Immersion Project* is to provide second year medical students (some do the immersion in their 3rd or 4th) with firsthand experiences of living in the Andwell Health Partners, Inc. (non-profit) Gosnell Memorial Hospice Home, Scarborough, ME, an 18 bed in-patient acute care environment (also referred to the ICU of hospice) to answer the research question: "*What is it like for ME to live in the Hospice Home for 48 hours and how does this contribute to my future as a physician?*"

Rationale: Until this project, what minimal time was allocated to palliative and end of life care education at U.S. Medical Schools and specifically UNECOM was accomplished through traditional medical education methods. Often times, students learn best through experience and participation. Living in the home provides this experiential component to augment learning.

Project Details:

Research Design: The *Hospice Home Immersion* project utilizes qualitative ethnographic and autobiographic research designs, whereby a unique environment or "culture" (Hospice Home) is observed and experiences of the student before, during, and immediately after the immersion are reported by each student. Data are in the form of journals; whereby each student writes notes containing both objective and subjective accounts of their processes and these notes are reviewed and responded to by Dr. Gugliucci. Reflection in action (Praxis) is at the foundation of this research.

Participants: This program is intended to provide medical (and health professions) students in training with firsthand experience of living in the Gosnell Memorial Hospice Home to encounter introprofessional end of life and palliative care for patients and family members. Students must be in good academic standing and 21 years of age or older to be eligible. Successful first year medical school completion is required for medical students.

Process: Students volunteer to conduct this research and agree to reside in the hospice home for 48 hours – 24 hours a day. They complete a registration form that includes their demographic data, an essay on their interest in participating in the project, and their assumptions about end of life and hospice care. The students are oriented by Dr. Gugliucci (Project PI) and, at the time of being "immersed" into Gosnell, receive an onsite orientation from a Hospice Home Social Worker (or designee). Once in the home, the students receive a Gosnell Staff name tag and security fob (they are considered to be staff). They provide direct patient care, family support, and post mortem care (avg # of deaths in 48 hrs = 5; range 2-10), participate in staff shift change discussions, and attend the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) meeting each morning.



As part of ethnographic data collection, students are required to write a journal starting the week prior to admission (pre-fieldwork), while living in the home for 48 hours (fieldwork), and for 14 days after discharge (post-fieldwork). The Gosnell Home provides a bed/room, meals, and interactions with interprofessional staff to augment learning (no cost).

While the students are living in the home, Dr Gugliucci reviews student journals – providing comments and asking open-ended questions to guide deeper reflections; and maintains contact with each student during the immersion. Daily review of students' field notes is critical to ensure data collection is effective and meets qualitative research standards. It also serves in monitoring each student's well-being as they encounter this culture. We also have a phone call after the first 24 hours, which aids in ensuring the students' learning is guided and progressing well. At the end of the 48 hours, the students participate in a debriefing session facilitated by Dr. Gugliucci where students share accounts over the 48 hours that includes their key learning experiences, reflections, and suggestions for ways to integrate these as they prepare for re-entry into their life as a medical student again. At the close of the project (after post-field work) the Hospice Home Manager receives a copy of completed student journals, which is marked "confidential".

Dissemination: Students are provided the opportunity to present their research as a poster or oral presentation and may consider an article publication. To submit their work, students would need to conduct qualitative data analysis on their journals as a team with the guidance from Dr. Gugliucci.

Dissemination of this project (as an informercial) also occurs at each lecture and presentation Dr. Gugliucci gives locally, nationally, and internationally. In addition, two sets of aggregate data analysis* (conducted by medical students who have been awarded UNE COM Student Research Fellowships) have been conducted thus far utilizing NVivo Qualitative Software. These project outcomes have been presented nationally and internationally.

*Puri, J, Moschella, S, *Etuka, BA, & Gugliucci, M, Fostering Empathy for the Patient: Medical Student Relationships During a 48-Hour Hospice Home Immersion, AY 2020-2021, Gerontological Society of America, Boston, MA, November 2025*

**Hanlon, S & Packard, B, Data and Thematic Analyses: Significance of Participating in the 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project, Carmen Pettapiece Student Research Fellowship Awards Mentor: Gugliucci, M, UNE COM, 2021-22*

**Ghandhari, Y, Data and Thematic Analysis: Significance of Third and Fourth Year Osteopathic Medical Students Participating in the 48 Hour Hospice Immersion Project, Research Clerkship, Mentor: Gugliucci, M, University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, 2021-22.*

** Presenting Author*

The Project was recognized with the *American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Peer Reviewed Award: Society of Osteopathic Medical Educators (SOME) Innovation in the Development of Enduring Medical Education Materials ~ for the 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Life Altering Medical Education & Research Project, 2017. I*

Selected Citations:

Gugliucci, M, Padmanabhan, D, & Silberstein, E (August 2020) 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Encourages Medical Students to Broaden Their Views on Dying and Death, Journal of the American Osteopathic Association. Vol. 120, 516-523. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7556/jaoa.2020.085>



Kodala, J, Gugliucci, M, and Farrell, C (2016) End of Life Care Medical Education: 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Alters Students' Lives. *International Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 7, 381-388.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ijcm.2016.76041>

Tobarran N, Byrne T, Gugliucci MR (2016) Accelerated Medical Education: Impact of a 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion. *J Gerontol Geriatr Res* 5: 299. doi:[10.4172/2167-7182.1000299](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-7182.1000299)

Gugliucci, M, Malhotra, H, & Gaul, A, (March 2015) Hospice Home Immersion Project: Advancing Medical Education. *International Journal of Clinical Medicine; Special Issue: Hospice and Palliative Care*, Vol.6 No.3, 158-169. doi:
[10.4236/ijcm.2015.63021](https://doi.org/10.4236/ijcm.2015.63021)

Media Coverage:

National Public Radio and Inside Higher Education Academic Minute. Gugliucci, M. Learning about Hospice Through Immersion. <https://www.insidehighered.com/audio/2022/12/20/learning-about-hospice-through-immersion>. Aired on December 20, 2022

Maine Sunday Telegram, Portland ME. Reporter: Kelley Bouchard. Article Title: "Hospice Project gives students rare insight into the end of life: The University of New England offers an unusually immersive care experience with patients facing death and dying. March 1, 2015. <http://www.pressherald.com/2015/03/01/hospice-project-gives-students-rare-insight-into-the-end-of-life/>