

---

## **Learning by Living: 48 Hour Hospice Home Immersion Project**

### **Introduction:**

The University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNECOM) 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 experiential medical education learning model by the Director of Geriatrics Education and Research within the Medical School's Department of Geriatric Medicine. The *Hospice Home Immersion Project* is 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 are "admitted" into nursing homes to live the life of an elder 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 *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 (and other health professions students) with firsthand experiences of living in the Hospice of Southern Maine (non-profit) Gosnell Memorial Hospice Home, Scarborough, ME, to answer the 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 practitioner?*"

**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.

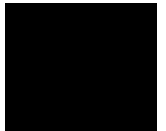
### **Project Details:**

**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 him/her. Data are in the form of journal notes containing both objective and subjective accounts. Reflection in action (Praxis<sup>1</sup>) 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 "admission," receive an onsite orientation from the Hospice Home Manager (or designee). As part of ethnographic data collection, students are required to write a journal starting 3 days prior to admission (pre-fieldwork), while living in the home (fieldwork), and for 5 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 student is living in the home, Dr Gugliucci reviews student notes and maintains contact with each student during his/her stay. 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 s/he encounters this culture. At the end of the 48 hours, the students participate in a debriefing session facilitated by



Dr. Gugliucci with the Gosnell/Hospice Staff – a 1 hour session where students share accounts of their experiences and learning. At the close of the project (after post-field work) the Hospice Home Manager and Hospice of Southern Maine Administrator receives a copy of completed student journals.

Dissemination: Students and Dr. Gugliucci review journals and conduct content analyses for poster and oral presentations, and article publications. Dr. Gugliucci presents an infomercial on the project at each lecture and presentation she gives locally, nationally, and internationally. Aggregate data analysis is in progress utilizing NVivo Qualitative Software as part of Dr. Gugliucci's 2016 Sabbatical.

---

<sup>i</sup> It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order to critically reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection. (Freire Institute)