U of T Nursing and SickKids set to improve palliative and end-of-life care for children with cancer across Canada thanks to Canadian Partnership Against Cancer grant

Toronto, ON (April 16, 2014) – Researchers at the University of Toronto and The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) today received funding to advance palliative and end-of-life care for children all across Canada. The Palliative and End-of-Life Care Initiative grant, part of a larger $13 million nation-wide initiative funded by Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) will allow the research team to implement a national roll-out of Education in Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Pediatrics (EPEC®-Pediatrics). EPEC®-Pediatrics is an innovative evidence-based program specifically designed for paediatric oncology physicians and advanced practice nurses.

Even with improvements in treatment, childhood cancer remains a leading cause of non-accidental death in children. Of the approximately 10,000 children living with cancer in Canada, more than 200 will die from the disease this year. Palliative care for children focuses on alleviating the physical, social, psychosocial and spiritual suffering experienced by children, while also promoting quality of life, fostering family connections and sustaining hope despite the lingering possibility of death.

“From the time of diagnosis, families need to receive care from health professionals who understand and apply the principles of palliative care to improve quality of life and address fears not only for the child, but for the whole family. In particularly challenging situations, earlier referrals to specialized palliative care teams have the potential to improve quality of care,” says Kimberley Widger, co-lead of the initiative, Assistant Professor in the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing at University of Toronto, and Nursing Research Associate with Paediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT) at SickKids.

The EPEC®-Pediatrics curriculum will ensure an improvement in health-care provider knowledge. Regional teams representing oncology, palliative care and the community from each of the 16 paediatric oncology programs across Canada will receive comprehensive education about evidence-based palliative care while also acquiring the tools to teach others. Upon completion of the curriculum, regional teams will become EPEC®-Pediatrics Trainers, with the knowledge and tools to disseminate all aspects of the curriculum to other healthcare providers. Trainers will be supported by the project team to implement new knowledge and skills and lead quality improvement projects in their local communities with a goal of improving the quality of palliative and end-of-life care for children with cancer.

“Children with cancer see a variety of health care professionals in hospital, in the community and at home. By enhancing knowledge about paediatric palliative care across the board, we feel that
this education initiative provides a real opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and families who are dealing with cancer,” says Dr. Adam Rapoport, co-lead of the initiative and Medical Director of PACT at SickKids.

About the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer
The Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, a federally-funded agency, works in partnership with Canada’s cancer community to reduce the burden of cancer on Canadians. Grounded in evidence and informed by the experiences of those affected by cancer, the organization convenes, catalyzes and supports the work of cancer agencies such as The Hospital for Sick Children and Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto through partnerships to achieve long-term outcomes that reduce the incidence of cancer, lessens the likelihood of Canadians dying from cancer, and improve the quality of life of those affected by cancer. The Partnership is especially pleased to be a partner in the launch of this new initiative with The Hospital for Sick Children and the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing.

About the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing
The Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto is an internationally renowned professional faculty at a world-leading research-intensive university. We educate nurses to provide high-quality patient care, manage and lead in health-care settings, and conduct primary research that advances health and patient care. For more information about Bloomberg Nursing, visit http://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/.

About The Hospital for Sick Children
The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) is recognized as one of the world’s foremost paediatric health-care institutions and is Canada’s leading centre dedicated to advancing children’s health through the integration of patient care, research and education. Founded in 1875 and affiliated with the University of Toronto, SickKids is one of Canada’s most research-intensive hospitals and has generated discoveries that have helped children globally. Its mission is to provide the best in complex and specialized family-centred care; pioneer scientific and clinical advancements; share expertise; foster an academic environment that nurtures health-care professionals; and champion an accessible, comprehensive and sustainable child health system. SickKids is proud of its vision for Healthier Children. A Better World. For more information, please visit www.sickkids.ca.

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