In the news

- MDLinx, an online service that provides news, article abstracts, and CME, reports that the top 2 – and 10 of the top 50 – most-read articles on their HemeOncLinx specialty page in 2006 were on palliative or end-of-life care. (free registration required)
- Parts of the popular “I Can Cope” program of the American Cancer Society are now available online.
- FDA Approves Test for Predicting Breast Cancer Recurrence

Journal watch

The trouble with meds: Issues of medication safety have been prominent since the 2000 IOM report To Err is Human. Recent research highlights safety issues related to the significant increase in oral chemotherapies, and to problems with patient adherence to prescribed regimens for just about any condition. Both problems are addressed in a recent Boston Globe article, As oral cancer drugs gain, dosage problems grow. Also:

- Koutnik-Fotopoulos E. Innovative Solutions Prompt Medication Adherence. Pharmacy Times November 2006:100

Corticosteroids as antiemetics: Nausea and vomiting are notoriously associated with cancer chemotherapy, but also with surgery, opioids, other medications, and various advanced disease states. Corticosteroids are a frequent adjunct to the potent new antiemetics in the oncologist’s formulary, but they don’t get nearly the attention that other antiemetics receive. A new review article reveals the secrets of corticosteroid prevention and treatment of nausea & vomiting.


JAOA series on pain

Throughout 2005 the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association had 5 pain-related supplements. Free full-text articles from these supplements are now available online.

“How good is this patient’s end-of-life care?”

This is the question asked by a surgeon in an op-ed piece in the New York Times, ‘The Most-Avoided Conversation in Medicine.’ It is a question she now advocates adding to all discussions about patients with advanced illness. This is a story about missed opportunities to openly discuss with a patient his values and goals as his disease progressed. A similar case and a supportive editorial appear in the current issue of the Journal of Clinical Oncology. In this case, the missed opportunity is with a family member, but also with the physician trainee observing the care of the patient.


One more from the popular press

A recent article in the Boston Globe profiles Ira Byock, MD, Director of the Palliative Care Program at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire. Philosophically, Byock asserts that “the core of palliative care, ultimately, is not law or policy, but the ongoing interaction with patients.” One interesting tidbit: Byock is organizing a challenge to presidential candidates in this important primary state. Sounds like they better have a position statement on hospice and palliative care.

Connecticut Challenge date announced

The 3rd Annual Connecticut Challenge bicycle ride in Fairfield will be held July 28. The Connecticut Challenge Survivorship Clinic at the Yale Cancer Center is the beneficiary of this important fund-raising event. Not a
biker? Don’t worry—it’s a ride, not a race. You can choose to sign up for one of 4 legs ranging from 12 to 100 miles. You can ride as an individual, or join or form a team. Teams make training and the actual ride more fun. Lots of help and advice are given to the fund-raising commitment—visit the Connecticut Challenge site early & often!

Visiting Professor
The first annual Palliative Care Visiting Professorship was a huge success on January 8 – 11. Michael Levy, MD, is the founding Medical Director of the Palliative Care Service at Fox Chase Cancer Center. He is well known as a speaker and writer on many topics related to palliative care and medical ethics. In addition to his teaching and consultation in the Yale Cancer Center and Yale-New Haven Hospital, Dr. Levy was the centerpiece of the 2-day conference “Demanding Excellence in Hospice/Palliative Care.” The conference was co-sponsored by the Yale Cancer Center, the Connecticut Hospice, the Connecticut Cancer Pain Initiative, and the Connecticut chapter of the American Society for Pain Management Nursing. Several hundred multidisciplinary clinicians from throughout the state attended.

Palliative care resources
- The web site of the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care is chock full of resources. Sign up for the free monthly newsletter, browse the book reviews (and extensive book store), find links to numerous pain and palliative care journals, and much more.
- Last month we mentioned PalliativeDrugs.com as a resource for networking through its Bulletinboard feature. Based in the UK, PalliativeDrugs.com provides a unique and extensive online medication reference resource, the Formulary. Its monthly e-mail newsletter provides updates from both sides of the Atlantic. Now in its 2nd edition, they have published a hard-copy Hospice and Palliative Care Formulary. A new and indispensable edition specific to the United States, Hospice and Palliative Care Formulary USA, was published in 2006. It is available from Hospice Education Institute.
- The Palliative Care Service at Massachusetts General Hospital presents a wide range of clinical topics in its Palliative Care Grand Rounds. Many of these presentations are now recorded and made available as streaming video in their web site.

Palliative care at Yale Libraries
The Yale Libraries have an impressive list of resources for the clinician interested in symptom management and palliative care. Many are available online. Most books are in the most recent edition. Note that many general and specialty medical and nursing journals also frequently contain articles pertinent to palliative care. A sampling:

- Vincent T. DeVita, MD of the Yale Cancer Center and Yale Medical School is Editor-in-Chief of The Cancer Journal which devoted a special issue to the topic "Palliative Care and Supportive Oncology" in Sept/Oct 2006 (Vol 12, #5). Ann Berger, MSN,MD, formerly of Yale, was the Guest Editor.
- Dr. Berger is also an editor of Principles and Practice of Palliative Care and Supportive Oncology 3rd Ed., published in October 2006.
- Journal of Palliative Care
- Journal of Palliative Medicine
- Palliative Medicine
- Palliative and Supportive Care
- Supportive Care in Cancer
- Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing
- Journal of Pain
- Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy
- Journal of Pain and Symptom Management
- Pain
- Pain Management Nursing
- Pain Medicine
- Pain Practice
- Textbook of Palliative Care for Children
- Textbook of Palliative Nursing
- Textbook of Palliative Medicine

Education for Palliative Care
- ACE Project: Advocating for Clinical Excellence - Transdisciplinary Palliative Care Education
This NCI-funded study seeks to enhance the advocacy and leadership skills of competitively-selected psychologists, social workers and spiritual care professionals through an innovative transdisciplinary educational experience. Oct 23-26, 2007 (App deadline Mar 15, 2007). Contact Maren Spolum at (626) 256-4673 Ext. 63941 or ACProject@coh.org.
- The EPEC (Education in Palliative and End-of-Life Care) curriculum has been revised and is available online. There are 17 modules available for $30 each and awarding 1 CME for each. http://epec.net/EPEC/webpages/index.cfm
- Coordinating Care at the End of Life: The Role of Hospice. The American Hospice Foundation announces a new electronic (CD-ROM) CE course with contact hours for nurses, social workers and case managers. Contact Marsha Nelson, at 202-223-0204, Ext. 206 or mnelson@americanhospice.org. (http://www.americanhospice.org/news/SelfStudy.htm)
- Alliance of State Pain Initiatives 18th Annual Meeting June 21-23. Keynote: Ira R. Byock, MD. Boston, MA
- The Art & Science of Palliative Care Nursing June 7-8, 2007. Newton, MA.
- Program in Palliative Care Education and Practice (Harvard Medical School). An intensive two-session course (a week in April, another in November) for medical and nursing educators. Application deadline for 2007 is February 15. Applications for 2008 will be accepted in the fall of 2007. Review the course description and begin exploring your goals now—this course requires a personal & institutional commitment—and it’s worth it!

The Yale Cancer Center is a National Cancer Institute designated Comprehensive Cancer Center.