
AMDA Foundation Recognizes Research and Quality Care Innovators with Annual Awards

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During the American Medical Directors Association's (AMDA) 2008 Annual Symposium, March 6-9 in Salt Lake City, UT, the AMDA Foundation recognized innovative ideas and efforts to maximize quality long term care with the 2008 AMDA Foundation/Evercare® Awards and AMDA Foundation/Pfizer Quality Improvement awards.

AMDA Foundation/Evercare® Awards

The Foundation joined forces to establish a new award for 2008, the AMDA Foundation/Evercare® Awards for "improving the quality of life for persons living in nursing home." The awards of \$10,000 each reward nursing facilities for programs they have implemented to improve the quality of life for their residents. Starting this year, three awards will be made each year for improved advanced care planning and/or palliative care program. Evaluating and choosing this year's award recipients were: Alice F Bonner PhD, RN, Marianna Grachek MSN, CNHA, CALA; Anthony J. Lechich, MD; Joseph G. Ouslander, MD, CMD; Judith Peres; William D Smucker MD, CMD; and Joan Teno MD.

The 2008 AMDA Foundation/Evercare® Award recipients are:

- The Maria Joseph Center, Dayton, OH, for "Improving Outcomes: Identifying Issues Attributing to Unplanned Significant Weight Loss";
- Daughters of Israel, West Orange, NJ, for "Falls Reduction Program";
- Elderwood at Maplewood, Cheektowaga, NY, for "Flacker Form"; (palliative care award)

"We were extremely surprised—but excited—that our small project received this national attention," said Julie Hayes, Elderwood at Maplewood Assistant Director of Nursing. Her facility wanted to improve end-of-life care, so she implemented the Flacker Form, a tool that predicts mortality and morbidity for patients with

chronic illnesses. As a result of the tool, Hayes and her team can "identify patients earlier in their disease process and start end-of-life and care planning conversations earlier, as well as get advance directives in place." Not only did the number of patients with advance directives go up considerably, but the documents were clearer and more detailed.

"I started this project because I wanted to improve end-of-life care for our patients and their families; and I wanted to give a voice to our most frail, vulnerable elders," said Hayes. She added, "To win an award for this is icing on the cake."

AMDA Foundation/Pfizer Quality Improvement Awards

Through the Quality Improvement (QI) Awards, the AMDA Foundation and Pfizer encourage the development of innovative projects that will help make a distinct impact on the quality of long term care. This year's QI recipients are:

- Pasquale Frisina, PhD, Jewish Home & Hospital Life Care System, New York, NY: "Effects of Written Emotional Disclosure of Alzheimer's Disease"
- Suzanne Gillespie, MD, RN, University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY: "Improving Communication at Transition from the Skilled Nursing Facility to Emergency Department"
- Lene Levy-Storms, PhD, MPH, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA: "How to Communicate and 'Connect' with Alzheimer's: A Practical Strategy for Family Visitors of Relatives with Dementia"

"This award is important because it will enable me to complete a pilot study looking at an emotional disclosure paradigm in depressed Alzheimer's disease patients. If the findings are positive, it could lead to an expanded study and related projects—such as using the tool with depressed Parkinson's disease patients," said Dr. Frisina. He added that this research is significant because this tool has never been tested with the elderly nursing facility population.

The QI awards support initiatives that focus on facility staff education, quality improvement programs, research on interventions and treatment, and health literacy to directly enhance the quality of care provided to patients in long-term care settings. Proposals are accepted for a general quality improvement project or any one of five therapeutic areas: pain management, dementia, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, or urinary incontinence.

Awards are between \$10,000 and \$15,000 each and made to as many as three recipients annually. This is intended to cover salary support, consultant fees, materials, and travel to the AMDA Annual Symposium to present project results.

The AMDA Foundation, an independent not-for-profit organization, serves as the research arm of AMDA. The Foundation's mission is: "The AMDA Foundation advances excellence in patient care through research and its translation into long term care practice to support the members and mission of the American Medical Directors Association (AMDA)." The Foundation also takes an active role in outreach to residents, fellows and young career physicians with an interest in long term care.