

MEET THE FELLOWS

2016 - 2017

Randi Delirod

Fernando Gudiel

Maggie Hall

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Lisa Tordo

Randi Delirod

Internship: Bennett Cancer Center, Stamford Hospital
Stamford, CT

My internship for the Palliative Fellowship at Fordham was at the Bennett Cancer Center, an outpatient facility at Stamford Hospital. I have experienced palliative and end-of-life care personally, having made or assisted in the decision making process for family members and close friends. This opportunity with the Bennett Cancer Center has allowed me to integrate my personal and educational experiences in a professional setting, which in turn has helped me to recognize my passion for palliative social work. I find the work at Bennett both challenging and deeply rewarding, as I integrate biopsychosocial, cross-cultural care, spiritual care and end-of-life/palliative care in a collaborative and supportive setting with the goal of better patient outcomes.



I have a particular interest in applied ethics, which is what led me to social work. I have a Master's degree in Ethics and Society from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Fordham. I had the opportunity to co-present at Grand Rounds at St. Barnabas Hospital during my ethics practicum. This helped to broaden my awareness of the need for advanced bioethics education in healthcare. As the complexity of medicine advances, whether it is organ transplants, reproduction, genetic testing, palliative and end of life care, so do the ethical challenges confronting social workers.

Upon completion of this Fellowship I hope to have acquired the clinical skills necessary to offer palliative and end of life care through direct practice to patients and their families as a highly competent member of our profession. With this knowledge in hand, I wish to continue on to assume leadership responsibilities within palliative social work.

Fernando Gudiel

Internship: MJHS

New York, NY

I graduated from Brooklyn College with a Bachelor's degree in anthropology. I chose anthropology because I have always had an interest in people, culture and history. While that interest has not changed, my career interests have shifted. After Brooklyn College and several work experiences, I began working at a New York City HHC hospital as a caseworker in the Social Work department. This experience led to shifting my interest from wanting to be Indiana Jones to being a professional social worker.



I gained experience in many different areas in the hospital. I became familiar with the ED, Labor and Delivery unit, Rehabilitation unit and just about every other area in the hospital. Quickly, I was given my own unit of 21 patients to run. I had the opportunity to really get to know patients and their stories, because they usually remained on the unit longer than in other services on which I had worked. I also came to see another side of the healthcare system that seemed to place more emphasis on discharging patients than on caring for them.

A passion grew in me from this experience. This was especially so for working with older adults, whom I observed were often overlooked and neglected. I tried to advocate for my patients to receive appropriate care and referrals upon discharge. Through this work, I began to work with hospice patients. I saw that many were not educated about hospice and the benefits it brings to patients and families. With all this in mind, I decided to seek my Master's in Social Work at Fordham University. I began the program as a Bachelor's in Social Work student at Fordham and am now completing my MSW as an advanced standing student. I read about the Palliative Care Fellowship and applied for this program. I was very grateful to be accepted and have this opportunity.

As a Palliative Care Fellow, I was placed at MJHS this year. My experience at MJHS has been truly invaluable. They are dedicated to the education of the interns and providing a well-rounded experience that allowed me to work with their hospice community patients and also patients on their hospice IPU. But most importantly, their dedication to their patients and their families has truly been inspiring and exactly what I was looking for. It has been a great fit with my goal of becoming a social worker and helping people during difficult times, such as hospitalization and end of life.

I am excited to graduate in May 2017. But I am even more excited to begin my career as a professional social worker and pursue a career in palliative care. With the guidance provided to me through the Palliative Care Fellowship and my internship, I believe that I am prepared to work with patients and families in end of life care and able to provide high quality care that they not only should get, but deserve.

Maggie Hall

Internship: Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York

New York, NY

My interest in social work was sparked while a student at Penn State. I participated in the Penn State Dance Marathon (THON), which raised money and awareness for childhood cancer through various fundraising activities and participated in the 46-hour dance marathon. THON benefits the Four Diamonds Fund at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, where staff provide a myriad of services to children with cancer and their families. A unique aspect of THON is the opportunity for student volunteers to develop personal relationships with children and families affected by childhood cancer through its adopt a family program. Learning the personal stories of these incredible families compelled me to do more to help this population. I was inspired to become a social worker after hearing a Four Diamonds social worker speak about the ways in which she is able to support families affected by childhood cancer.



Childhood cancer is a cause that I have become extremely passionate about. After volunteering with THON, I worked for Sunrise Day Camp, America's only medical day camp for children with cancer and their healthy siblings. The interactions I had with the campers and families at Sunrise Day Camp expanded my understanding of the lifelong impact childhood cancer can have and how important maintaining normal experiences is for children affected by cancer.

My field placement this year is at Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York. I work in the Division of Hematology/Oncology and Stem Cell Transplantation with families of children undergoing bone marrow transplants. Often times, a bone marrow transplant is the last life-saving treatment option for these children. I have grown both professionally and personally at my field placement and my experience has reinforced my goal of continuing in this field. While this work can be quite challenging, it is a privilege to be able to offer support to families during this extremely difficult time in their lives. I am grateful for the support I have received from Dr. Berkman and the other Palliative Care Fellows, especially while taking the two electives in the Fellowship, and am comforted to know that this support will continue after graduation.

Keara Lincoln

Internship: Hospice Care Network

Long Island, NY

My social work path began at Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh, NY. During my junior year as a Human Services major, my internship placement was at Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties. There I ran children's bereavement groups and worked at the agency's inpatient unit. Working with patients and their families was work that fulfilled me and that I enjoyed. From there I knew that I was meant to have a career in palliative and hospice care.



I was encouraged by professors to apply for the Mount Saint Mary-Fordham 3+2 program. This meant that if accepted, my senior year would be spent at Fordham rather than Mount Saint Mary. This was not an easy decision for me, as I loved my home at Mount Saint Mary and the thought of leaving my friends was not easy, but I decided that this would be the best move for my career and for myself as a whole. Before I knew it, I had applied and was I accepted. I moved back to Long Island to be closer to Fordham and expand my field placement options for my first year at Fordham.

During my Foundation year I was placed at Family Service League in Amityville, NY. I was a Care Coordinator Intern working on the high risk mental health track. Although I enjoyed my placement and my co-workers, this is where I came to the realization that I wanted to, rather needed to, go back to working with the hospice and palliative care population that I so loved.

Midway through my first year at Fordham, I attended a presentation where Cathy Berkman informed us about the Palliative Care Fellowship. I knew I had to apply. So I did, and was accepted for the 2016-2017 cohort. My field placement is at Hospice Care Network located in Woodbury, NY. This agency covers all of Long Island and part of Queens, where I was placed. Working in Queens was new territory for me. Having been born and raised on Long Island and spending my undergraduate years in upstate New York, I was nervous. Working at Hospice Care Network in Queens was a transition for me. But, as they say, change is never easy, but it is how you grow. And I did, I grew. I grew spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and most importantly I grew as a social worker.

At Hospice Care Network, I am working with persons from many religious and cultural groups, some that I had not known existed. I learned something new about myself and others every single day of my placement. Spending the last month, weeks, and days with people so welcoming and open to care is an experience that I cannot put into words, but I am so grateful that I was able to be in my patients lives.

Ending my field placement is one of the hardest goodbyes I have had in my 23 years of life. Hospice holds a special place in my heart and I am excited to continue my career in hospice and palliative care.

Ellen Lourie

Internship: MJHS

New York, NY

I'm honored to have been a Palliative Care Fellow at Fordham. It has been a life changing experience to provide services to patients and family members who face serious illness and end of life. I have always been dedicated to helping people work as they experience developmental challenges. Prior to studying social work, I had worked as a preschool teacher, where I developed art-based curriculum designed to help young children make healthy developmental transitions. I provided psychoeducation about healthy behavior management to parents. Through my experience teaching art in many settings, I see the many opportunities to incorporate the therapeutic benefits of art and creativity in practice.



During my foundation year in the MSW program, I provided concrete services and evidence-based counseling to older adults who had low income and were aging at home. I conducted psychosocial assessments and initiated telephone support groups using Reminiscence Therapy and poetry to reduce depression levels in homebound seniors. Those experiences informed my work as a Palliative Care Fellow.

This year, as a hospice social worker at MJHS, I have provided counseling, psychoeducation, life review, bereavement support, and concrete support to clients. I've learned about many effective non-pharmacological interventions this year. I've learned to apply knowledge of theories learned in class, such as Erikson's 8th stage of life: ego integrity vs despair. As an intern at MJHS Hospice I assess and document acute symptom management in IPU settings and in the community. I participate in interdisciplinary team meetings, work with collateral contacts, and conduct family meetings.

I'm highly motivated to continue working in palliative care because I can really make a difference in people's lives. The work is complex and satisfying. I'm extremely grateful for this experience and I'm looking forward to my future work in hospice and palliative care.

Yanex Orellana

Internship: *Cancercare*

New York, NY

After graduating from Rutgers University in 2012, I did not know what I wanted to do with my career. I felt that even though I had a Bachelor's degree, I still needed to learn more and that my education journey was not done. After two internships working in non-profit organizations with social justice organizations, I realized that I should pursue a Master's degree in social work. The question was where in social work did I fit in and what would bring fulfillment to my career. I began working as a case manager in the geriatrics field to give myself time to think about entering an MSW program. Through my job, I realized that helping individuals and providing social and emotional assistance was something that made me feel rewarded. It was at that moment that I decided to pursue my degree in social work, and I never looked back.



My experience at Fordham has been life changing. I've had the opportunity to apply the skills from the classroom to my job and also to my field placements. One of the pivotal moments at Fordham has been becoming a Palliative Care Fellow. Through this Fellowship, I had the opportunity to work with clients who have changed my life forever. My placement is at *Cancercare* and through this placement I have learned to see life through a different lens. Most importantly, I have come to appreciate the art of being present. My clients range from those who are terminally ill, their caregivers, and the bereaved. Each client has a unique story, and through counseling, their story has taught me invaluable lessons about death and life. Cancer has a unique way of changing one's life from one day to another. I have learned that no matter how hard or hopeless a situation appears, there is still something to look forward to and have quality of life.

I am forever grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Palliative Care Fellowship. It has given me an appreciation for the human and existential side of social work. I came in looking to change people's lives, and in the midst of all that, mine was changed - not only professionally, but personally. I will forever carry in my heart the stories and resilience my clients had. It is because of this opportunity that I finally found my calling in social work and I look forward to pursuing a career in palliative care.

Johanna Tappen

Placement: Calvary Hospital

New York, NY

I am originally from Fishkill, NY and graduated from Boston College with a BA in Psychology and a minor in Sociology in 2010. After completing my undergraduate studies, I was interested in pursuing a post-graduate faith-based service program, and joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps from 2010-2012. During my first year of JVC, I lived in Raleigh, NC with fellow volunteers, and was placed as a Children's Advocate for PLM Families Together, a transitional housing agency for families experiencing homelessness. During my second year in JVC, I again lived in an intentional community of fellow volunteers in Houston, TX, working at a residential foster care agency named Casa de Esperanza de los Ninos. After five years of post-Bachelor's service work, and a particularly formative period of time as a foster parent, I decided to pursue my academic passion areas through social work graduate studies back home in New York.



Right from my very first day at Fordham University, I was drawn to the mission of the Palliative Care Fellowship program. The Fellowship program piqued my interest in work with individuals facing the unique challenges of serious illnesses in medical settings. Becoming a part of the Fellowship community has made so many amazing learning opportunities possible for me in my second year of graduate school. Due to being a Palliative Care Fellow, I have had incredible professional mentorship and guidance from leaders in the palliative care field.

My Advanced Year internship is at Calvary Hospital. At Calvary, I have had the life-changing opportunity to work with patients and families facing advanced cancer and other life-limiting or terminal illnesses. I have learned so much and grown immensely as a social work intern at Calvary, and have received incredible clinical supervision and mentorship from medical and palliative social work colleagues. My placement has truly been an invaluable experience so far, and I am looking forward to continued growth and training in this important specialty field.

Being a Palliative Care Fellow has also opened the door to other opportunities. These include the immense privilege of being a student in Fordham's first ever Palliative Social Work elective course last Fall, while also being awarded the chance to attend continuing education classes and a one-day conference on spirituality and palliative care that have furthered my learning and training.

This year has been a formative one in my MSW graduate training. In addition to the internship and courses, the monthly lunches with the seven other Fellows has provided an opportunity for

meeting on a regular basis to support one another in the emotional and valuable work that we are exposed to in our different internships. The Fellowship has inspired me to feel very excited about and grateful for what lies ahead for me professionally as I prepare to graduate with my MSW this May. I am beyond grateful to have the opportunity to be a Palliative Care Fellow this year, and look forward to further enhancing my knowledge base and skill set as a new social worker so that I may hopefully continue working and learning in this growing field.

Lisa Tordo

Internship: Christian Health Care Center, Palliative Care Service

Wyckoff, NJ

After graduating from Ramapo College of New Jersey with a BA in psychology and business, I grappled with the decision about which direction I wanted to take for my career, knowing that I wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. I worked in the field of mental health as a counselor for people with severe and persistent mental illness in residential treatment, and learned much about the vitality of the human spirit. I also learned about systemic, structural issues of oppression and discrimination that many people with mental illness face. This led me to research social work graduate programs, because social workers analyze the multi-systemic nature of issues affecting clients, families, communities, and organizations. The social work values of service and respecting dignity of the person from a human rights and social justice framework enticed me.



I began my social work journey at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in an STD clinic in Harlem. I conducted substance use assessments and maintained a caseload of clients coming for individual therapy services. I saw people of different ages, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which gave me the opportunity to explore my own positionality and intersectionality in my clinical practice. I gained generalist practice knowledge and learned about different evidence-based interventions. However, upon researching different fields of social work, I came to realize that my strong desire is to work with patients in palliative care settings.

As an adolescent and young adult, I experienced grief and bereavement with several deaths in among my family and friends in a short period of time. Although some of these were sudden and unexpected, others were not, and family members could have benefitted from palliative care interventions. My family was not informed about this, because recognition of the field was still growing. This made me realize I wanted to advocate for growth in both micro and macro systems in bringing comfort and increasing the quality of life of patients with at different stages in their illness. An aspect of palliative social work that particularly attracts me, given my interest in family dynamics and interventions, is the focus on working within a patient- and family-centered care framework. I knew that being a Palliative Care Fellow could help me gain skills in doing this work with seriously ill patients and families.

My advanced year placement is at Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff, NJ, which primarily serves the older adult population through their long-term care and rehabilitation facility. Through my work with the rehabilitation patients, I continue to gain valuable knowledge about

working on an interdisciplinary team, creating care plans, participating in family meetings, and supporting patients with end-of-life concerns. Interventions focus on and pain and symptom management, emotional and spiritual growth, and social engagement and development, all of which stem from a biopsychosocial-spiritual approach to assessment and treatment. I am grateful for the excellent, informative supervision I receive from my field instructor, in addition to the support I receive from the other Fellows and the program director in the Palliative Care Fellowship Program at Fordham.