

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Unity Health begins study

Unity Health System is seeking 350 senior citizens to assist in a national study. The goal is to determine the most effective method of delivering mental health and substance-abuse services to people 65 and older.

Lack of treatment and services for mental health and substance abuse can affect physical health, according to health-care officials. And seniors take longer to recover from physical problems when mental-health problems are being ignored.

Unity's Department of Psychiatry and Behavior Health has received a \$1.3 million federal grant for the study. It is the only Upstate New York facility taking part in the study, which is being coordinated by Harvard Medical School.

The study will look at two methods of delivering services: the referral model, in which a primary-care physician refers a patient to an alternate site; and integrated services, in which mental-health and substance-abuse services are located at the same site as primary-care services.

Participants will be compensated, and must be patients at Park Ridge Internal Medicine, West Side Internal Medicine, Spencerport Family Medicine, Parkway Family Medicine or Chili Center Family Medicine. For further information, call Louise Quijano, manager of Primary Care/Behavioral Health at 716/368-6900, ext. 8952.

Chaplains share the healing touch

HOUSTON (CNS) — As transplant patient Steve Foster tells it, when Father Bruce Noble visited him in the intensive care unit, the clouds outside the window cleared away, letting the day's first sunlight into his room.

Father Noble, chaplain at The Methodist Hospital in Houston, won't take credit for the daylight but has brought sunshine into patients' lives for 12 years.

Father Noble, 63, and his identical twin brother, Father David Noble, a chaplain at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, have been recognized for their hospital ministry work with two lifetime achievement medals.

The Australian-raised Nobles were awarded the 2000 Millennium Medal of Honor by the American Biographical Institute. They also received the Outstanding Persons of the 20th Century Medal from the International Biographical Institute of Cambridge, England.

What means the most to Father Bruce Noble about the honors is that they were awarded to the brothers for their collective ministry work.

Their lives have truly paralleled each other, from their physical appearance to their careers. Both of the bespectacled twins sport short gray hair, beard and mustache and black clericals. Both were ordained as Episcopalian priests but became Catholics in 1987.

Both spent considerable time in the Marriage Encounter movement, conducting 800 marriage encounters in 13 countries, which is a world record.

And, of course, both are devoted to their respective hospital's spiritual care mission. Father Bruce Noble said he is attracted to hospital ministry because he can help people facing intense vulnerability.

Father Bruce and his fellow chaplains



Denny Angelle/CNS

Father Bruce Noble, left, and his identical twin brother, Father David Noble, receive honors for their hospital ministry work in Houston.

help with patients' mental and spiritual healing, whether it's with a few words of encouragement, a prayer or Communion.

"They come here as people in crisis, their lives disrupted, their income in trouble, their self-esteem challenged and they are dealing with life and death issues," Father Bruce said. "They are separated from their church. I provide continuity and sacramental support."

Even with the frequent stares and second takes the Noble twins receive, Father Bruce feels great personal joy about being an identical twin. He said the experience also helps him with his life's work. Since birth, he has had someone else to consider, to relate to and to share with. As a chaplain, he said, it helps him relate better to patients and to see life from their perspective.

A typical day for Father Bruce begins with looking over a list of new admissions and those who are being prepared for surgery to determine which are Catholic. For the patients about to undergo surgery, he offers to anoint them with oil, pray with them, and hear their confessions.

"They gain courage and strength from this," he said.

Father Noble sees joy and sorrow in his job at the Methodist Hospital.

In one room, he might visit with a patient who simply wants to pray with him. But in the next room, he might counsel a family who is faced with end-of-life issues. He said the challenge is to give the individual care and compassion that is deserved.

He offered that compassion to patient Steve Foster, who had a liver transplant in March. Foster and Father Noble met several times before the transplant, preparing Foster spiritually.

"When I had a tough day and wondered if I'd ever get out of here, Father Bruce prayed over me and made me calm," he said.

Foster's birthday was two days after his life-saving transplant, and "Father Bruce reminded me that I got the ultimate present from God."

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