Assessing Symptoms in Diverse Populations with Advanced Illness  
(also listed as: Multicultural Symptom Management Assessment Tool)

Description

This interactive session will discuss symptom assessment in diverse patient populations with advanced illness. By 2050, 57% of the 420 million adults in the U.S. will include racial or ethnic minorities. Coping with chronic progressive illness in a diverse population is a major challenge for individuals and families, the healthcare system, and society. Management of problems that occur in the context of advanced illness, especially pain and other symptoms, may be complicated by cultural and language barriers, distress, isolation, and family burden. As the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse, high-quality palliative care must be able to address these differences. This session will highlight challenges in multicultural symptom assessment and prepare attendees for addressing them. It will illustrate key concepts in transcultural symptom assessment, including fatalism, stoicism, and beliefs about pain. Handouts will include culturally-relevant validated tools for symptom assessment. Clinical cases will be discussed using examples from an ongoing study on cancer pain in Chinese immigrants in New York City's Chinatown. Best practice strategies for assessing pain in culturally diverse populations will be described. Participants will be asked to periodically respond to questions about developing patients’ plan of care and the presenter will outline current perspectives on how to effectively assess patients to optimize symptom and functional outcomes in palliative care.

Dr. Lara Dhingra joined the MJHS Institute for Innovation in Palliative Care as Director of Health Disparities and Outcomes Research in July 2014. Her research interests are in palliative care and health disparities research. She received her BA in Psychology at the Johns Hopkins University, her PhD in Clinical Psychology with a specialty in behavioral medicine at the Illinois Institute of Technology, followed by a Clinical Psychology Residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. She then completed a National Cancer Institute-sponsored Research Fellowship in Psycho-oncology in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Following her Fellowship, she joined the Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at Beth Israel Medical Center, where she became Co-chief of Research, and appointed as Assistant Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Dr. Dhingra has numerous scientific publications and has presented at national and international conferences. She has served on peer review committees for the American Cancer Society’s (ACS) Palliative Care and Symptom Control Research and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Pain Consortium's Centers of Excellence in Pain Education. Presently, she is Vice-chair of the Pain and Disparities Special Interest Group for the American Pain Society, and Chair of the Pain Special Interest Group for the Society of Behavioral Medicine. She serves on the Editorial Board of the journal Pain Medicine, and has been the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator of several federally, foundation, and industry-supported studies. Currently, she is implementing an ACS-funded quality improvement intervention for cancer pain among Chinese immigrants in New York City's Chinatown.