

# 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Barbara and Alan Echikson Memorial Palliative Care Symposium

## Navigating Difficult Conversations: Communication, Culture, and Competence

*CE Accredited Live Virtual and In-Person Event*



**Wednesday, April 22, 2026**  
**4:00 - 7:30 pm**

### Jointly Provided by

Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center  
Bioethics Palliative Care Education Committee  
and Rutgers Health



**Generous Financial Support Provided by**  
Bill Echikson in honor of his parents  
Barbara and Alan Echikson  
and the Robert J. Freeman Memorial Fund

## Activity Overview

Conversations about prognosis, goals of care, and end-of-life decisions are among the most challenging aspects of clinical practice, yet many healthcare professionals receive limited formal training in how to navigate them effectively. Evidence shows that delayed or unclear communication, unaddressed cultural differences, and inconsistent team messaging often lead to care that does not align with patient values, contributes to conflict, and increases distress for patients, families, and clinicians alike.

This multidisciplinary symposium is designed to close these gaps by providing practical, evidence-based strategies for conducting difficult palliative care conversations with clarity, compassion, and cultural humility. Through real-world cases and expert guidance, participants will learn how to respond to requests for non-beneficial treatment, manage emotionally charged discussions, and engage patients and families in shared decision making that honors individual values and beliefs.

By attending, learners will gain greater confidence and skill in communicating across disciplines, cultures, and care settings strengthening team collaboration, improving patient and family experience, and supporting high-quality, goal-concordant care throughout serious illness and at the end of life.

## Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be better able to:

- Identify common drivers of conflict and requests for non-beneficial therapies in serious illness and end-of-life care.
- Apply evidence-based communication frameworks, including the use of “headlines” and plain language, when discussing prognosis and treatment options.
- Demonstrate strategies for incorporating cultural humility into palliative conversations to support individualized, values-based decision making.
- Differentiate cultural tendencies and individual variability in end-of-life preferences, including family roles, truth-telling norms, and spiritual considerations.
- Establish goals of care that align medical recommendations with patient values, cultural identity, and psychosocial context.
- Integrate interdisciplinary perspectives to promote consistent, team-based communication and shared decision making in palliative care settings.

## Faculty

### **Robert M. Arnold, MD**

Professor of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine; Vice Chair, Professional Development, Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

### **Cynthia X. Pan, MD, FACP, AGSF**

Chief, Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care Medicine, Associate Program Director, Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship, NewYork-Presbyterian Queens; Professor of Clinical Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine

## Planning Committee

*Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center*

### **Maria Roesler, MSN, RN, CHPN**

### **Mary Velardi-Stoffel, MSN, RN, NP-BC, HNB-BC**

### **Deana Bryant, Deana Bryant, MSN, APN, FNP-BC, RN**

### **Lavinia Burroughs**

### **Valerie Cantave, MSN, APN, FNP-BC**

### **Phyllis S. DeJesse, DMN, MA, RN**

### **Wendy Edwards, MD**

### **Kristin G. Fless, MD**

### **Harriet Freeman, BA**

### **Rabbanit Jennifer Geretz**

### **Brittany Haliani, MLS, AHIP-D, CHIS II**

### **Brandy Johnson, MSW, LCSW, APSW-C, OSW-C**

### **Bilal Khan, MD, MBA**

### **Jolly Kuruvilla, DNP, APN, NP-BC MSN(ED), RN, CCRN, CEN**

### **Kedisha Lloyd, MSN, APN, FNP-BC**

### **Natasha Lopez, MSN, APN, AGNP-BC, CCRN, CSC, CMC**

### **Angela McCabe, MSW, LCSW-R, OSW-C**

### **Yola Mossad, MSN, APN, AGACNP-BC, CCRN**

### **Rosemarie Vasquez, DNP, APN, AGNP-C, ACHPN**

### **Miriam Zander, DO**

The relevant financial relationships of all individuals who affect the content of continuing education activities and any discussion of off-label/investigational uses will be disclosed to the audience at the time of the activity.

## Accreditation



In support of improving patient care, this activity has been planned and implemented by Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences and Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center. Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

**Physicians:** Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences designates this live activity for a maximum of 3 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

**Nurses:** This activity is awarded 3 ANCC contact hours. Nurses should claim only those contact hours actually spent participating in the activity.



**Social Workers:** As a Jointly Accredited Organization, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved under this program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. Social workers completing this course receive 3 clinical and culture competency continuing education credits.

## Method of Participation

In order to meet the learning objectives and receive continuing education credits, participants are expected to register for the activity, watch the webcast and complete an online evaluation at the conclusion of the activity. A CE certificate will be emailed to participants upon completion of the online evaluation.

## Additional Information

For additional information, questions, concerns, or if you require special arrangements to attend this activity, please contact CCOE by email at [ccoe@rbhs.rutgers.edu](mailto:ccoe@rbhs.rutgers.edu)

Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center and Rutgers Health reserve the right to modify program content, faculty and program activities. It also reserves the right to cancel the activity if necessary.

Activity Code: 26MC08

## Agenda

- 4:00 pm *Welcome*  
**Maria Roesler, RN, MSN, CHPN**  
Administrative Director of Palliative Care
- Introduction*  
**Kristin G. Fless, MD**  
Chair, Department of Medicine, Director, Division of Pulmonary, Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center; Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
- 4:05 pm *Evaluation Instructions*  
**Mary Velardi-Stoffel, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, HNB-BC**
- 4:10 pm *Speaker Introductions*  
**Wendy Edwards, MD**  
Former Medical Director of Palliative Care  
Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center
- 4:15 pm **Dealing with Requests for “Unreasonable Therapies”: Promoting Understanding and Shared Decision Making**  
**Robert Arnold, MD**
- 5:15 pm Q&A
- 5:40 pm *Break*
- 5:45 pm **Multicultural End of Life Conversations**  
**Cynthia X. Pan, MD**
- 6:45 pm Q&A
- 7:15 pm Closing Remarks
- 7:30 pm *Adjourn*

## Registration Fee: Complimentary

### Pre-registration is required.

Registration for the symposium can only be accepted through our secure online website until April 20, 2026.

### To Register:

<https://rutgers.cloud-cme.com/27CBMCPalliativeCare>



## Confirmation

Once registered, you will receive an email confirmation. As the activity date approaches, you will receive additional information to assist you with your plans to participate in this activity.

## Virtual Meeting

Information and instructions for virtual platform access will be emailed to registrants on or around April 20, 2026.

## In-Person Venue

Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center (CBMC)  
Islami Auditorium  
94 Old Short Hills Road, Livingston, NJ 07039

**Seating at CBMC is limited. Registration will close once maximum capacity has been reached.**

Information for directions, parking and other means of transportation will be emailed to registrants the week of April 20, 2026.

## Course Material

In an effort to provide the most complete materials to attendees and conserve resources, PDF versions of the lecture slides will be made available online to registered attendees. Additional information will be provided in future confirmation communications.