***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**THE HASTINGS CENTER** Contact: Susan Gilbert, Director of Communications

845-424-4040 x244

[gilberts@thehastingscenter.org](mailto:gilberts@thehastingscenter.org)

**Physicians Honored for Outstanding Care of Patients**

***Five leaders specializing in care at the end of life have been selected to receive the 2020 Hastings Center Cunniff-Dixon Physician Awards.***

In this period of global struggle as health care professionals are putting their lives on the line, we are pleased to honor five exemplary physicians who specialize in care of patients near the end of life. It seems particularly important to continue this tradition even in the midst of this pandemic.

The Hastings Center Cunniff-Dixon Physician Awards honor physicians for their outstanding contributions in one or more of four areas: medical practice, teaching, research, and community. Awards in the amount of $25,000 each are made to one senior and one mid-career physician, and three additional awards in the amount of $15,000 are given to early-career physicians.

The Cunniff-Dixon Foundation, whose mission is to enrich the relationship of doctors and patients who are near the end of life, created and funds the awards. The Hastings Center, a bioethics research institute that has done groundbreaking work on end-of-life decision-making, cosponsors the awards.

The Hastings Center Cunniff-Dixon Physician Awards have been celebrating exceptional doctoring near the end of life for the past 10 years,” says Mildred Z. Solomon, president of The Hastings Center. “May we all experience a moment of gratitude as we recognize this year’s extraordinary honorees for their clinical contributions and commitment to patients, families, and communities.”

The 2020 recipients are:

**Senior Physician Award:** **Rodney O. Tucker, MD, MMM, FAAHPM,** director of the UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care and the Christine S. Ritchie Endowed Chair in Palliative Care Leadership, University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Dr. Tucker works in internal medicine and in hospice and palliative medicine, providing palliative care for patients with chronic illnesses such as heart failure and other non-oncologic conditions. He aims to improve the delivery of health care and palliative care across settings, and has been engaged in developing one of the most comprehensive clinical, educational, and research programs in palliative care in the U.S. His nominator noted, “Rodney is as skilled at engaging patients and families as he is with engaging colleagues and health system leaders. He personifies the adages ‘keep patients and families at the center of the health care mission’ and ‘value relationships’.”

**Mid-Career Physician Award: Julie Wilson Childers, MD, MS, FAAHPM,** medical director of the palliative care service at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh and senior associate with VitalTalk. She has written and taught nationally on discussing goals of care, and managing addiction in patients who are nearing the end of life. Her nominator wrote, “Dr. Childers has a passion for improving the care of individuals with serious illness, as any leader in end-of-life care must. Clearly, she is first and foremost an extraordinary palliative care leader.”

**Early-Career Physician Awards**:

**Meaghann Weaver, MD, MPH, FAAP,** division chief of pediatric palliative care at the Children’s Hospital and Medical Center and the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. She is deeply committed to interdisciplinary team care, acknowledging the ways in which her colleagues in palliative care, social work, chaplaincy, nursing, and massage therapy inspire her work in the field. Dr. Weaver’s pediatric palliative care team received the Circle of Life Citation of Honor in 2019 from the American Hospital Association for their caring work with children with life-limiting diagnoses and their families. Dr Weaver's research focuses on interventions to improve pediatric palliative care delivery and health equity.

**Katharine Brock, MD, MS,** assistant professor of pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, director of the Supportive Care Clinic at the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center, and an attending physician on the interdisciplinary Pediatric Advanced Care Team, PACT. Dr. Brock has devoted her efforts primarily to pediatric palliative oncology. A dedicated researcher, teacher, and mentor, she is codirector of the Pediatric Communication Series, using simulation-based training to teach pediatric residents and fellows best-practice communication techniques. Her nominator wrote, “Her ability to bridge the gap between doctor and patient is so fluid that patients and families feel safe and comforted by her.”

**Claire Ankuda, MD, MPH,** assistant professor in the department of geriatrics and palliative medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. She conducts health services research to assess how payment policies, and, in particular, Medicare policy, impact outcomes for seriously ill older adults and their families. As a family medicine physician board-certified in hospice and palliative medicine, Dr. Ankuda focuses on relieving the suffering of patients with serious illnesses. Both her research and clinical work involve interdisciplinary teams who address the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs of both patient and family.

The award recipients were selected by a committee convened by The Hastings Center and chaired by Kathleen M. Foley, MD, a professor of neurology, neuroscience, and clinical pharmacology at Weill Medical College of Cornell University and an attending neurologist in the pain and palliative care service at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. The committee members are Thomas P. Duffy, MD, professor of medicine emeritus at Yale University School of Medicine; Diane E. Meier, MD, FACP, director of the Center to Advance Palliative Care at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City; and, Anthony Galanos, MD, medical director at Duke University Hospital Palliative Care Service.