



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center.

Each summer, approximately 30 undergraduate nursing students wishing further exposure to the field of oncology are selected to participate in a highly competitive Clinical Assistant Program (or "CAP") at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (www.mskcc.org). The role of the CAP student is to help to provide nursing care to cancer patients and perform any related activities necessary to the general operation of a Memorial Hospital inpatient unit. CAP students receive classroom instruction, as well as didactic training, functioning under the direct supervision of MSK nursing staff.

Thanks to a generous gift from the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program, all 36 of this year's CAP students attended a special one-day session to improve their communication skills and increase their confidence in dealing with difficult topics. This unique workshop included three sessions:

1. Responding Empathically to Patients and Families
2. Discussing Death, Dying, and End-of-Life Goals of Care
3. Handling Challenging Interactions with Families

Using trained actors to role-play in brief scenarios simulating real-life clinical situations, these interactions were video-recorded for later viewing and feedback. Sufficient time was allocated – about 30 minutes for didactic work and 90 minutes for role-playing – to enable a lively discussion and exchange between the Comskil mentors and CAP students. Standardized Patient Assessments ("SPAs") measured changes in the CAP students' communication skills with patients, and significant improvements were noted. Based on its initial success, MSK plans to provide this model program to future nursing students.

Memorial Sloan Kettering is deeply appreciative of Fred Flynn's philanthropy.