

Palliative Medicine: Program Description

Program Description:

Palliative Medicine was recently approved as a subspecialty by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC). The Subspecialty Residency Training Program in Palliative Medicine will be a new program at the University of Toronto starting in July 2017, pending approval of our application by the RCPSC (expected in the fall of 2016).

This residency program will be a 2-year program that will consider applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set by the RCPSC. The previous 1-year program, which was conjointly accredited by the RCPSC and the College of Family Physicians of Canada, has been replaced by a 1-year certificate of added competency program that will only accept applicants with a background in family medicine.

The mission of the Palliative Medicine Subspecialty Residency Program at the University of Toronto is to train outstanding palliative care subspecialists who will use clinical, academic and scholarly skills throughout their future careers to improve the quality of death and dying for patients and family members.

The proposed program meets the specific training requirements set out by the Royal College. In the first year, trainees will acquire core palliative care knowledge and skills by rotating through palliative care services in a variety of inpatient, outpatient and community settings. In the second year, trainees will learn about the management of end-stage non-cancer illness through a series of focused off-service rotations. Trainees will have 2 blocks of research and 2 selectives during their 2-years of training.

Trainees will be required to complete a scholarly or academic project during the course of their training. This project will be conceived, designed, conducted, analyzed and hopefully published by the trainee, under the supervision of a faculty mentor, on a topic of interest and relevance to the trainee. Elements of the academic half-day are devoted towards concept and design, and helping trainees get their projects going. Projects will be reviewed and evaluated in a peer-review format at the conclusion of the training program, and presented at the national meeting of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians at the end of the second year.

Program Curriculum:

The residency program is 2 years long, and consists of 26 four-week blocks.

The first year of training includes 13 blocks that are intended to cover core palliative care skills and concepts. This will include inpatient palliative care consultation (3 blocks), outpatient palliative care consultation (2 blocks), home palliative care (2 blocks), community Hospice (1 block), community long-term Palliative Care Unit (1 block), Palliative Care Unit (3 blocks), and Psychosocial Oncology (1 block). There will also be an academic half-day to cover core teaching topics.

In the second year, trainees will move off-service and rotate through off-service rotations that are Medical Oncology (1 block), Radiation Oncology (1 block), End-stage renal disease (1 block), End-stage heart failure (1 block), End-stage lung disease (1 block), Geriatrics (1 block), Neurology (Neurodegenerative disease; 1 block), Critical Care Response Team (ICU; 1 block), Research (2 blocks), and selectives (2 blocks). The academic half day in the second year will be devoted towards the completion of a scholarly or academic project and the attendance of rounds as appropriate.

Other core elements of teaching includes a 1-day communication course (“Heart to heart”), a 4-week ethics mini-curriculum, a 4-session wellness course, and sessions devoted to Quality Improvement and patient safety.

Training Sites:

There is no primary site for training. The centres below are in alphabetical order:

- Baycrest Hospital
- Bridgepoint Hospital
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- St. Michael’s Hospital
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- University Health Network – Toronto General, Toronto Western, and Princess Margaret Sites

Most sites are downtown and/or can be accessed by walking, shuttle bus or TTC. Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre can be accessed from downtown via a shuttle bus from Women’s College Hospital, TTC or car. For the Home Palliative Care blocks, every effort will be made to assign trainees to an area of the city appropriate to the type of transportation they can access. This will be discussed with trainees at the start of the training program.

Eligibility Criteria:

For funding purposes, each province has criteria that must be met by the applicants who apply for positions within that province. Eligibility requirements vary from province to province. Please carefully review the Ontario eligibility criteria when preparing to apply to the University of Toronto’s Palliative Medicine subspecialty residency program. Please visit the CaRMS website for details regarding [provincial criteria](#).

Application Process:

For this year, the application process will take place outside of the CaRMS Medicine Subspecialty Match (MSM). In order to simplify the application process, and avoid any issue of CaRMS-related commitments, the five universities that are accepting applicants have chosen to harmonize their application processes and timelines, with the aim of making offers and confirming successful applicants prior to the residents' Rank Order List (ROL) submission deadline of October 27th (which is the last day that a resident can withdraw from CaRMS). This way, no applicant should have to make the difficult decision of whether to withdraw their CaRMS application without first being certain that he/she has been accepted into a Palliative Medicine residency position.

The components and timeline for the application process will be similar to that for the CaRMS MSM:

1. **Application Submission & Deadline:** Applicants must submit completed applications no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on Friday, September 9, 2016 to Program Director Dr. James Downar (james.downar@utoronto.ca). Applications and supporting documents submitted after September 9, 2016 will not be considered or reviewed. Any applications missing the required documents listed below will be considered incomplete.
 - **Curriculum vitae**
 - **Proof of residency status or certification in primary specialty**
 - e.g. transcript or letter of appointment
 - **Personal Statement** - 500 word maximum
 - **3 - 5 reference letters**
 - One letter must come from your current program director, and we require at least one letter to come from teaching faculty with clinical exposure to the applicant. Please give some thought to your selection of referees. They should know you well and be in a position to comment on your clinical skills, knowledge and interpersonal skills. They should be able to compare your performance to the expected standard of your level, or other residents they have worked with. Letters in excess of 5 will not be reviewed; with the committee reviewing only the first 5 sequential letters in the applicant's file.
 - **Canadian Citizenship** – submit one of the following documents to verify your citizenship
 - Canadian Birth Certificate or Act of Birth
 - Certificate of Canadian Citizenship
 - Confirmation of Permanent Residence in Canada
 - Passport page showing Canadian Citizenship
 - Canadian Permanent Resident Card (both sides)

Additional required IMG documents

- Language Proficiency: Submit one of the following documents to verify your language proficiency.
 - IELTS
 - Letter of language proficiency
 - TOEFL - IBT
- Must provide proof of English or French language proficiency through ONE of the following:
 - International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a minimum score of 7 in each component, OR
 - TOEFL-Ibt – passing score of 93 including a minimum score of 24 on the speaking section, OR
 - A pass result in the French proficiency test administered by the Collège des Médecins du Québec, OR
 - Candidates for whom their primary and secondary, or medical school education was conducted in English or French, the Ontario medical schools will accept Language Proficiency Attestations as follows:
 1. Primary and Secondary Education: Mailed directly from the Senior Academic Administrators of both schools to the program confirming that all of the candidate’s primary and secondary education was conducted completely in English or French.
 2. Medical School: Mailed directly from the Dean of the candidate’s medical school confirming that the language of instruction and patient care was conducted completely in English or French OR
 3. International Medical Education Directory (IMED) Language Option – If the instruction and the language of patient care at the undergraduate medical school was conducted completely in English or French, then a candidate can submit to the Program a copy or printout of the World Director of Medical Schools website listing the medical school which clearly states that the language of instruction is English or French.
- MCCEE – Statement of Results
- MCCEE – Supplemental Feedback Report

Interview Invitations: Programs will contact all applicants selected for an interview, via email, between Wednesday, September 14, 2016 and Friday, September 16, 2016 (inclusive).

Interview Process: Interviews will be conducted by the residency programs between Wednesday, October 5, 2016 and Thursday, October 13, 2016 (inclusive).

2. **Rank Order List (ROL):** After interviews are conducted, both candidates and schools are to submit their ROL to Mary-Kay Whittaker marykay.whittaker@utoronto.ca before 3:00 p.m. EST on Monday, October 17, 2016. Ms. Whittaker is an independent consultant who previously ran the Ontario IMG match. She is currently on contract with the University of

Toronto, but will operate as a neutral third party.

3. **Match Results:** Match results will be submitted to candidates and Program Directors at 12:00 p.m. EST on Tuesday, October 18, 2016.
4. **Match Confirmation:** Candidates are to confirm their acceptances with their matched school Program Director by email as soon as reasonably possible. The deadline to confirm acceptance is 12:00 p.m. EST on Friday, October 21, 2016.

Interview Details:

Application files will be reviewed and scored by members of a file review committee on the basis of the personal statement, reference letters, interest in palliative medicine, interest in academic work, and the strength of the curriculum vitae/ transcript. Applicants will be contacted for interviews once the files have been reviewed.

Each candidate will undergo an interview with a panel of 3 or more interviewers. The interview panel will include the Program Director and a current or recent graduate from the conjointly accredited residency training program. Candidates will have an opportunity to ask questions about the program at the end of the interview.

Candidates who do not have an interview will not be considered for ranking.

Selection Criteria:

Each school will rank its candidates using its own selection process.

University of Toronto, Palliative Medicine candidates will be selected based on:

1. A strong file, including:
 - a. A well-written personal statement, outlining your reasons for applying to the subspecialty residency program.
 - b. Evidence of clinical skill in palliative care from referees.
 - c. Evidence of interest in palliative medicine, including at least one elective in palliative care.
 - d. Evidence of interest in scholarly or academic activity in the form of current or previous projects. Note that these projects do not have to be directly relevant to palliative care; we understand that applicants may have only recently discovered a passion for Palliative Care. We are looking for interest and ability in scholarly or academic work in general.
2. Performance during the interview, including:
 - a. Interpersonal and communication skill.
 - b. Commitment to Palliative Medicine

The ideal candidate is a compassionate physician who has demonstrated strong clinical skills and commitment to palliative medicine, and who has shown an interest in pursuing scholarly or

academic activity. If you have any questions about the application process or the residency training programs, please do not hesitate to contact one of the program directors listed above.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the difference between this program and the 12-month training program that previous trainees have completed?

A: The previous 12-month program (the “conjoint” program) was a training program that all final-year trainees or practicing physicians could apply to, which was conjointly accredited by the RCPSC and the CFPC. This program will no longer exist as of July 2017. This program was replaced by 2 separate programs- a 12-month certificate of added competency program accredited by the CCFP (which is intended for family medicine trainees and graduates only) and a 24-month subspecialty program accredited by the RCPSC (the program described on this web page) that allows multiple entry routes.

Q: How do I know if I am eligible to apply for the subspecialty program?

A: According to the RCPSC, trainees are eligible to apply if they have Royal College Certification in Internal Medicine, Anesthesiology, or Neurology, or enrolment in a Royal College accredited residency program in these disciplines (see requirements for these qualifications).

Entrance from other specialties may occur but must follow completion of the primary specialty training and must include twelve (12) months of clinical medicine-based rotations with a minimum of 6 months at a senior level (e.g. PGY-2 or if resident is regularly entrusted with responsibility for direct independent patient care under the supervision of and direct responsibility to a senior subspecialty resident or faculty member), designed to allow achievement of competencies in the consultation and care of complex medical patients, interprofessional care, and effective communication skills.

All candidates must be certified in their primary specialty in order to be eligible to write the Royal College certification examination in Adult Palliative Medicine.

If you are unsure whether or not your training would make you eligible to apply, do not hesitate to contact the program director.

Q: This program has not yet been approved by the RCPSC. If there is any delay in the process and the program is not approved this fall, will I still be able to start my training in July 2017?

A: A trainee can begin a training program even before the training program itself has been officially approved by the RCPSC. The program must receive approval within the first 11 months of the start of training (in this case, June 2018).

Q: Do I need to do an elective at the host University in order to be accepted?

A: We are looking for trainees who are skilled, dedicated and interested in a career in Palliative Care. This skill, dedication and interest can be demonstrated at any University. It is helpful to have completed an elective at any university where you are applying (for you as much as for the program), but this is not a requirement to be accepted into a program.