

## Research

Care Dimensions has a strong commitment to conducting innovative, collaborative research that advances the science of high quality care for the seriously ill.

Director of Research [Caitlin Brennan, PhD, APRN](#), leads our research initiatives and is supported by Senior Clinician Scientist [Susan Lysaght Hurley, PhD, RN](#) and Research Project Manager [Morgan Murphy, BS](#). If you are an investigator interested in conducting research with our agency, please email: [Research@CareDimensions.org](mailto:Research@CareDimensions.org).

[Please click here for current projects](#). Below is a list of past funded research and projects, as of January 2026.

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## Past Funded Research

### Improving Service Delivery for Live Discharge from Hospice Care



Hospice care improves end-of-life outcomes for older adults and individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRД), yet with eligibility limited to a six-month prognosis, hospice is not structured to meet longer-term needs.

- Many older patients stabilize, or have a change in prognosis, leading to a 'live discharge.'
- In 2019, 6.5% of all hospice discharges were patients discharged alive due to no longer meeting eligibility requirements (nearly 90,000 patients annually).
- With increasing hospice enrollments overall, live discharges are expected to increase and patients with chronic illnesses are those most likely to be impacted.

- Patients discharged alive from hospice and their primary caregivers (PCG) lose access to important services and resources.
- Although expected prognoses have changed, patients still require substantial care and PCGs often struggle to process feelings of abandonment and uncertainty.

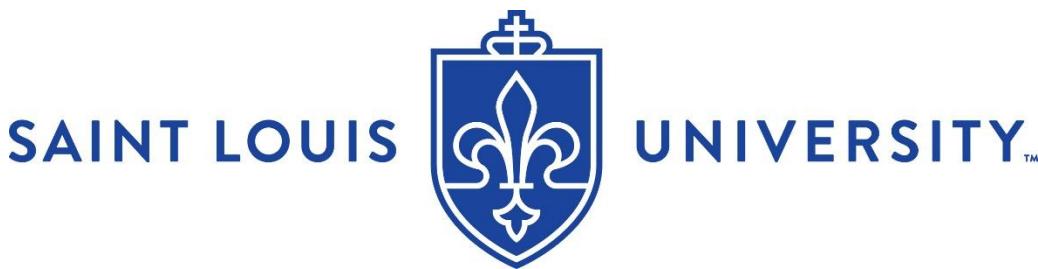
Currently, hospice agencies all approach a live discharge differently, with no coordinated discharge process to guide practitioners to ensure patients/PCGs have ongoing support and care services. To address this gap, a live discharge protocol (LDP) was created driven by research and guidance from an expert advisory board.

**Principal Investigator:** [Stephanie P. Wladkowski, PhD, LMSW, APHSW-C](#)

**Timeline:** Winter 2024-Winter 2025

**Funding Sponsor:** Cambia Health Foundation Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program

## R21: The Impact of Live Discharge from Hospice on Patients & Caregivers



There are an increasing number of patients who months after admittance to hospice, experience a “live discharge” from services due to a stabilization in their condition, losing access to important services and resources. Little is known about what happens to these patients post hospice discharge, what their primary care needs are, or how patients and their primary caregivers attempt to meet those needs. This study aimed to:

1. Evaluate outcomes of quality of life and caregiver well-being, healthcare utilization (e.g., number of hospitalizations, ER visits, care transitions), and health status (e.g., functional status, pain, death) at time of live discharge and following a live discharge.
2. Determine service utilization patterns (where patients receive care) and the quality and continuity of care transitions following a live discharge.

3. Analyze perspectives on the experience of service coordination and potential impacts to quality of life for adult patients and their primary caregivers following a hospice live discharge.

**Principal Investigator:** [Cara Wallace, PhD, LMSW, APHSW-C](#)

**Funding Sponsor:** National Institute of Nursing Research

**Timeline:** Spring 2023-Fall 2024

**Website:** <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/wtzZtl-hOkW0Ky467JRhhA/project-details/10256712>

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## Safe Opioid Education and Disposal in the Home Hospice Setting



The focus of this project was to:

1. Expand our pilot work for caregiver training skills for safe home hospice medication destruction program to our entire service area.
2. Develop expert educational content for hospice interdisciplinary team members for safe opioid disposal.
3. Promote the dissemination of an interdisciplinary training module to area hospices in partnership with Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts to ensure maximum depth, reach and knowledge sharing of our work and learnings.

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Tjia, MD, MSCE

**Co-Investigators:** Susan Lysaght Hurley, PhD, RN, Alifia Waliji-Banglawala, PharmD

**Funding Sponsor:** Amerisource Bergen

**Timeline:** Fall 2020-Spring 2021

**Publication:** Godzik, C. M., Waliji-Banglawala, A., Tjia, J., Brennan, C. W., Wood, O., Murphy, M. E., DiBenedetto, J., Pashchenko, O. I., & Hurley, S. L. (In Press).

Knowledge, attitudes, and practices surrounding safe medication disposal in a

hospice setting. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsympman.2025.05.008>

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## R33: The Hospice Advanced Dementia Symptom Management and Quality of Life Trial (HAS-QOL)



**HARTFORD INSTITUTE FOR GERIATRIC NURSING**  
**THE NYU RORY MEYERS COLLEGE OF NURSING**

This study focused on quality improvement via the implementation of Aliviado Dementia Care, a dementia symptom management and quality of life training for members of the hospice interdisciplinary team. A total of 25 hospice agencies participated in this study across the United States. The goals were to improve quality of care for the person living with dementia and their caregiver, reduce antipsychotic medication use, and increase caregiver satisfaction.

**Principal Investigator:** Abraham (Ab) Brody, PhD, RN, FAAN

**Funding Sponsor:** National Institutes of Health

**Timeline:** January 2020-December 2023

**Website:** <https://nursing.nyu.edu/research/project/hospice-advanced-dementia-symptom-management-and-quality-life-trial-has-qol>

**Publication:** Brody, A., Durga, A., Ford, A., Sadarangani, T., Jones, T., Convery, K., McCabe, D., & Lin, S.-Y. (2023). Implementing Aliviado Dementia Care in a 25-site Pragmatic Trial: Lessons for Performing Interventional Research in Hospice (FR222C). *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 65(3), e289–e290.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsympman.2022.12.102>

## Caregiver Connection



The Rita  
and Alex  
**Hillman**  
**Foundation**

This pilot study developed a nurse-led caregiver support program, Caregiver Connection. The program adapted the mobile-health application TapCloud for family caregivers, with the goal of enhancing communication and support for those with unmet needs. Between Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, 60 caregivers were enrolled in the study. Participants had access to the TapCloud app on their personal phones, which allowed them to use a “check-in” feature to share about their well-being. A dedicated Caregiver Connection nurse provided direct messaging and phone support. Data were collected on caregiver burden, demographics, TapCloud engagement, program acceptability, and care transitions.

**Principal Investigator:** Susan Lysaght Hurley, PhD, RN

**Funding Sponsors:** NextFifty Initiative, Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation

**Timeline:** January 2020-January 2022

**Presentation:** Hurley, S.L., Brennan C.W., Wood, O. (2022). Caregiver Connection: Bilingual Support for Home Hospice family Caregivers Using a Mobile Health App. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Expo.

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## R21: Interactions Among Adolescents with a Parent in Hospice and the Hospice Care Team



This national study aimed to develop evidence-based approaches to supporting adolescents with a parent or guardian receiving hospice or palliative care. Eligible participants included young adults aged 18-30 who experienced a parental death

during adolescence (ages 12-17) whose parent was receiving hospice or palliative care at the time of their death. Participants completed a Coping and Communication Questionnaire and a virtual interview about their experience.

**Principal Investigator:** Denice Sheehan, PhD, RN, FPCN

**Funding Sponsor:** National Institute of Nursing Research

**Timeline:** Spring 2020 – Spring 2022

**Website:** <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/MXUSwWFcT0KxypGnln0jwA/project-details/9979111#description>

**Publication:** Grayson, W., Sheehan, D. K., Stephenson, P. S., DeBois, K., & Sheehan, C. (2025). Strategies to prepare hospice providers to interact with adolescents with a parent in hospice. *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 23, e113.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951525000446>

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## R21: Standardized Patient-Centered Medication Review (SPECTORx) in Home Hospice



This was an NIH-funded intervention study that focused on patient-centered medication review, family caregiver support for medication management, and standardizing approaches to appropriate medication use. This intervention provided evidence-based tools to equip hospice staff with the latest information about how to regularly review, simplify, and align patients' medications to their goals of care as end-of-life approaches.

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Tjia; MD, MSCE, FAAHPM

**Co-Investigators:** Margaret Clayton, PhD, APRN-BC, FAAN, Susan DeSanto-Madeya, PhD, APRN -CNS, FAAN

**Funding Sponsor:** National Institute of Aging

**Timeline:** Winter 2020-Spring 2021

**Website:** <https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT03972163>

## R01: The Hospice Today Project



This study aimed to answer the following question: Do members of the hospice care team (HCT) fill-in the “family-centered care piece” and provide a comprehensive, holistic and responsive approach to hospice family caregivers’ ongoing needs? The study also aimed to understand the overall experience of a primary caregiver.

**Principal Investigator:** Lee Ellington, PhD

**Funding Sponsor:** National Institute of Nursing Research

**Timeline:** Winter 2020-Spring 2020

**Website:** <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/hDhlFeFwoUSD4AiGqFAvFg/project-details/9734178>

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## The Hospice Today Project: Focus on LGBTQ+ Family Caregivers and Patients



The goal of this study was to learn more about how hospice providers communicate with and meet the needs of LGBT patients and family caregivers. We hoped to learn more about end of life concerns, hospice support and communication needs that are unique to families with LGBT+ members. We hope this knowledge will support the best care possible for all families receiving home hospice services. We interviewed

family or primary caregivers who identify as LGBTQ+ and who currently or in the past three years have cared for a family member or close other with cancer. We also conducted focus groups with hospice interdisciplinary team members to learn about their thoughts and experiences related to caring for LGBT patients and family caregivers.

**Website:** <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/hDhlFeFwoUSD4AiGqFAvFg/project-details/9734178>

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## Past Funded Projects

### Case Management Skills Development and Career Pathing for RNs, LPNs

Care Dimensions received over \$400,000 from the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Grant to address critical workforce needs for our nursing staff. This program focused on expanding our case management curriculum and our hospice nurse residency program.

- The research and education departments collaborated to create an updated case management training module that focused on time management, visit structure, interdisciplinary communication, and self-care.
- Training development was informed by feedback from our expert clinical nurse educators and interviews with our Registered Nurse Case Managers (RNCMs) and Clinical Managers.
- The module was assigned to all current RNCMs and received positive feedback and is continually assigned to all newly hired RNCMs.

The expansion of the hospice nurse residency program allowed for us to successfully make the following changes:

- Include LPNs in addition to RNs, addressing additional hiring and training needs
- Add a second cohort of nurse residents each year, providing additional hiring opportunities for nurse residents new to hospice
- Hire a dedicated clinical nurse educator and administrative assistant for the nurse residency, improving the efficiency of our workflows and increasing available support for nurse residents

**Team:** Caitlin Brennan, PhD, APRN; Dawnnett White, BSN, RN; Adrianna Anemoduris, MSN, RN; Jennifer Barrasso, BSN, RN; Morgan Murphy, BS; Michelle Comeau

**Funding Sponsor:** Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Grant through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

**Timeline:** Spring 2023-Spring 2025

## Hospice Nurse Residency

The focus of this project was on the recruitment and retention of hospice and palliative care nurses by filling a gap in post graduate transition to practice in hospice care. For newly hired nurses Care Dimensions developed both a nurse residency program for newly hired nurses who had just graduated or experienced nurses transitioning to a new clinical area, and on-line modules in hospice and palliative care to be used in the residency program and for staff development.

**Project Director:** Susan Lysaght Hurley, PhD, RN in collaboration with Diane Welsh, DNP, APRN, CNE (Regis College)

**Timeline:** February 2015-January 2017

**Funding Sponsor:** Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund grant through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

**Publications:** Godzik, C. M., Hurley, S. L., Buck, H. G., Yacinthus, B. A., & Brennan, C. W. (2023). Adaption of the Casey-Fink Survey Tool for Nurse Residency Programs: Making It Relevant for Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse Residency Programs. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, 53(6), 307–312.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/nna.0000000000001291>

Hurley, S. L., Welsh, D. M., Roy, K. M., & Godzik, C. (2020). Bridging the Gap: A Hospice Nurse Residency Program. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 51(8), 371–376. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20200716-07>