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Symposium highlights role spirituality, community play in mitigating healthcare bias

(PASADENA, MD, Nov. 6, 2019) — More than 250 professionals and community members gathered at First Baptist Church of Highland Park in Landover, Maryland, on Oct. 19 to learn about hospice, palliative, and bereavement care at the **Caring for the Continuum of Life: A 2019 Healthcare Symposium**.

This was the second year for the event hosted by Hospice of the Chesapeake, Chesapeake Life Center and Chesapeake Palliative Medicine. Like last year's event, it was completely free for attendees, featuring 15 expert presenters in the fields of hospice and palliative care, grief counseling, cultural studies and spirituality in nine different sessions. Professional social workers and counselors also enjoyed receiving up to five free continuing education credits.

An important theme that ran throughout the event was acknowledging the cultural bias in accessibility to healthcare and how professionals and community leaders can work to overcome this. Spirituality plays an important role in bridging that gap, and in helping patients and families make life-changing decisions. "At Hospice of the Chesapeake, we believe everybody has a right to spiritual care," Chief Medical Officer Dr. Eric Bush said. "Spirituality is very important at the end of life. As clinicians, when we are faced with the withdrawal of ventilators or other similar life-support measures, one of the most important people who should be at the patient's side is not the intensivist or the chief of the hospital, but the person offering pastoral care or spiritual care."

The importance of reaching out to work with faith and other community leaders was an important factor in planning the event. The symposium opened with the keynote presentation "Courage, Hope and Transformative Leadership: Key Components in Connecting Culture to Caring for Those with Serious Illness," by Karen Bullock, Ph.D., LCSW, a professor and Assistant Dean of the School of Social Work at North Carolina State University. It closed with "DocTalk with Faith-Based Leaders," an open discussion with physicians and faith-based leaders on living with serious, life-limiting illnesses.

Perhaps the most prominent evidence of the organization's commitment to including the faith community in its mission was the location itself. The success of this year's event is the beginning of what the nonprofit hopes will be a continuing partnership with First Baptist Church of Highland Park in educating the community on living with advanced illness and coping with loss.

The event was sponsored in part by University of Maryland Capital Region Health.

High resolution photos available on request. Pictures taken on Oct. 19, 2019, at First Baptist Church of Highland Park in Landover, Maryland, by Elyzabeth Marcussen of Hospice of the Chesapeake.



Symposium Keynote Speaker Karen Bullock poses with Hospice of the Chesapeake Chief Medical Officer Dr. Eric Bush during a break in the program.



Dr. Eric Bush introduces the “DocTalk with Faith-Based Leaders” panel. From left are the Rev. Henry Davis, Nadia Hassan, Dr. Alvin Reaves III and Rabbi Steve Weisman.



Hospice of the Chesapeake Patient Care Volunteer Annetta Cook, right, demonstrates to an attendee a hand massage technique using aromatherapy oils in the Wellness Space.



Presenter Yolonda Wilson, Assistant Professor at Howard University, talks with Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation Board Vice Chair Terri Hussman after Wilson's presentation on "Implicit Bias and Racism in End-of-Life Care."

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For 40 years, Hospice of the Chesapeake has been caring for life throughout the journey with illness and loss. For more information, visit www.hospicechesapeake.org.