

Health and Aging Policy Fellows Profiles

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HAPF Fellowship Q&A

Describe your HAPF fellowship placement(s):

I worked for 6 months on the Health Subcommittee of the Senate HELP Committee; and for about 8 months for the Disability Aging and Long Term Care section of the office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at HHS. No specific roles or projects.

What are some of the most important new skills/knowledge that you learned during your placement?

The most important thing I learned is the central importance of participating- of being a part of the policy process- for clinicians. Policy makers have little insight into the real world of doctors and patients and clinicians have almost no insight into the pressures, perspectives (for example, policy makers are always on the look out for fraud and abuse), and culture and vocabulary of the policy world. Until we integrate these perspectives more effectively, clinicians have only ourselves to blame for the mismatch between delivery and payment policy and the needs of our patients. Clinicians must become public citizens and engage in the policy process if we are to be truly dedicated to the care of the sick.

How would you assess the impact you had at your fellowship placement?

I am not sure what impact I was able to have. My placement occurred in the immediate aftermath of the passage of the Affordable Care Act. No one on the hill wanted to talk or even think about healthcare. Similarly, once I got to the executive branch, the chaos and confusion over just how this enormous new law should be implemented made it difficult for an unpaid outsider to get a handle on the inner workings (or lack thereof) inside HHS.

How has the HAPF Fellowship influenced your current work and career path?

The fellowship has been transformational for my work on improving access to quality palliative care. I understand that the field must participate in developing and testing quality measures; in advocating with CMS and NQF and the MAP program for their inclusion in value base purchasing; in educating both elected and executive branch policy makers on what palliative care is and how it improves value; and in the importance of effective and nimble coalition building as a lever to get things done. I had the steepest learning curve of my career after my medical internship. Just wish I had been able to do it 10 years earlier!

Biography:

Diane E. Meier, MD, FACP, is Director of the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), a national organization devoted to increasing the number and quality of palliative care programs in the United States. Under her leadership the number of palliative care programs in U.S. hospitals has more than tripled in the last 10 years. She is also Vice-Chair for Public Policy and Professor of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine; Catherine Gaisman Professor of Medical Ethics; and was the founder and Director of the Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute from 1997-2011, all at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

Dr. Meier is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2008 MacArthur Fellowship — a \$500,000, no-strings-attached “genius award” for individuals who have shown exceptional creativity in their work and the promise to do more. She was named one of *20 People Who Make Healthcare Better* in the U.S. by HealthLeaders Media 2010 and received an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Oberlin College in 2010. In 2012, she was awarded American Cancer Society’s Medal of Honor for Cancer Control in recognition of her pioneering leadership of the effort to bring non-hospice palliative care into mainstream medicine and received the American Geriatrics Society Edward Henderson State-of-the-Art Lecture Award in 2013. She is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Other honors include the Open Society Institute Faculty Scholar’s Award of the Project on Death in America, the Founders Award of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization 2007, AARP’s 50th Anniversary Social Impact Award 2008, Castle Connolly’s Physician of the Year Award 2009, and the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine Lifetime Achievement Award 2009. She is currently Principal Investigator of an NCI-funded five-year multisite study on the outcomes of hospital palliative care services in cancer patients. Dr. Meier served as one of Columbia University’s Health and Aging Policy Fellows in Washington DC during the 2009-2010 academic year, working both on the Senate’s HELP Committee and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Meier has published more than 200 original peer review papers, and several books. Her most recent book, *Palliative Care: Transforming the Care of Serious Illness*, was published by Jossey in 2010. She edited the first textbook on geriatric palliative care, as well as four editions of *Geriatric Medicine*. As one of the leading figures in the field of palliative medicine, Dr. Meier has appeared numerous times on television and in print, including *ABC World News Tonight*, *Open Mind with Richard Hefner*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, the *New*

Yorker, *AARP*, and *Newsweek*. She figured prominently in the Bill Moyers series *On Our Own Terms*, a four-part documentary aired on PBS.

Diane E. Meier received her BA from Oberlin College and her MD from Northwestern University Medical School. She completed her residency and fellowship training at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland. She has been on the faculty of the Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine and Department of Medicine at Mount Sinai since 1983. She lives in New York City.