Documentary to Celebrate the Life of Hospice Pioneer Dame Cicely Saunders

Video biography about Dame Cecily Saunders and her role in improving end-of-life care

SUMMARY

The American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Madison, Wis., in partnership with Tellens, a documentary and film production company in Evanston, Ill., conducted research for a documentary video on Dame Cicely Saunders of Great Britain, founder of the modern hospice/palliative care movement.

The project was part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) national program Targeted End-of-Life Projects Initiative.

Key Results

The research phase for the documentary consisted of:

- Conducting in-depth interviews with Dame Cicely Saunders in the spring of 2003 at her home in London and at St. Christopher's Hospice.

- Developing collaborative relationships with two experts in the field of hospice and palliative care in order to understand Dame Saunders's work in a larger context.

- Reviewing the literature in the field, including Dame Saunders's personal papers; the Hospice History Project's collection of 150 oral histories of hospice pioneers in the United Kingdom; and seminal publications on the history of hospice and palliative care.

- Identifying sources of visual material, including photographs of Dame Saunders' patients, television and radio broadcast appearances of Dame Saunders, and photographs collected by the Hospice History Project.

Funding

RWJF contributed to the project with a grant of $49,990 between October 2002 and September 2003.
CONTEXT

This project fell under RWJF's *Targeted End-of-Life Projects Initiative*, which supports solicited and unsolicited projects that advance RWJF's objective to improve care at the end of life. RWJF has pursued three strategies in this effort:

- To improve the knowledge and capacity of health care professionals and others to care for the dying.
- To improve the institutional environment in health care institutions and in public policies and regulatory apparatus to enable better care of the dying.
- To engage the public and professionals in efforts to improve end-of-life care.

This project fit within the third strategy.

THE PROJECT

Producers at Tellens conducted background research as the first stage of a planned 60-minute television video documentary on the life and work of Dame Cicely Saunders, MD, RN, MSW, who founded St. Christopher's Hospice in 1967, the first modern hospice to combine research and teaching with clinical care. The research phase for the documentary consisted of:

- Conducting in-depth interviews with Dame Cicely Saunders in the spring of 2003 at her home in London and at St. Christopher's Hospice.

- Developing collaborative relationships with two experts in the field of hospice and palliative care in order to understand Dame Saunders's work in a larger context. The experts were: David Clark, PhD, Director of the Hospice History Project at the University of Lancaster; and Irene Higginson, PhD, Professor of Palliative Medicine at Kings' College Medical School, London, and Scientific Director of the Cicely Saunders' Foundation.

- Reviewing the literature in the field, including Dame Saunders's personal papers; the Hospice History Project's collection of 150 oral histories of hospice pioneers in the United Kingdom; and seminal publications on the history of hospice and palliative care. The producers also interviewed experts in the United States and Canada.

- Identifying sources of visual material, including photographs of Dame Saunders' patients, television and radio broadcast appearances of Dame Saunders, and photographs collected by the Hospice History Project.

AFTERWARD

Tellens is working to secure funding for the production and post-production stages of the video documentary.
APPENDIX

Other Funders

(Current as of the end date of the program; provided by the program’s management; not verified by RWJF.)

- The American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- American Hospice Foundation
- American Pain Society
- The Chest Foundation (ACCP)
- Horizon Hospice (Chicago)
- Hospice Foundation of America
- Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Association