

November 16, 2012 | By Kim Edwards

## UC San Diego Physician Honored for Pioneering Palliative Care Advances

**American Cancer Society recognized Charles von Gunten, MD, PhD, at annual meeting**

Charles F. von Gunten, MD, PhD, FACP, FAAHPM, provost and vice president of the Institute for Palliative Medicine at San Diego Hospice, a teaching affiliate of the UC San Diego School of Medicine, is this year's American Cancer Society "Pathfinder in Palliative Care" honoree. The award – which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated innovation and ingenuity in their contributions to the advancement of the field of palliative care – was presented today at the Society's Nationwide Volunteer and Staff Leadership Summit in Atlanta.

"There is nothing more meaningful to a physician than to be recognized for having an impact on patients' and families' lives," said von Gunten, who is also medical director of the Doris A. Howell Palliative Care Service at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. "To be recognized by ACS – a patient advocacy organization – is a pinnacle moment in my career."

von Gunten holds an established investigator award from the National Cancer Institute and is the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. He is a founding trustee and past chairman of the American Board of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and immediate past president of the American Association for Cancer Education.

"The American Cancer Society is committed to both saving lives and improving the quality of life of individuals and families facing cancer," said Vincent T. DeVita Jr., MD, president of the American Cancer Society. "Dr. von Gunten deserves to be recognized for his commitment to his field and for his pioneering efforts to improve palliative care in this country."

Palliative care is a branch of medicine that specializes in symptom management and pain control while also addressing psychological, spiritual and social concerns. The goal is the best quality of life for patients with serious illnesses and their families. Dr. von Gunten is one of very few internationally recognized palliative medicine educators. Under his leadership, among the

earliest palliative medicine graduate fellowship training programs were launched at Northwestern University, and he now leads the largest palliative medicine fellowship training program in the nation at San Diego Hospice and UC San Diego Health System.

In 2011, von Gunten received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM), the professional organization for physicians who care for patients with serious illness.

For more on the Doris A. Howell Palliative Care Service at Moores Cancer Center:

<http://cancer.ucsd.edu/coping/support-services/Pages/palliative-care.aspx>

### **About UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center**

UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center is home to nearly 350 medical and radiation oncologists, cancer surgeons, and researchers. It is one of only 40 National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the country, a rare honor distinguishing exceptionally high achievement in research, clinical care, education and community outreach and partnerships. For more information, visit <http://cancer.ucsd.edu>

### **About the American Cancer Society**

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end cancer for good. As a global grassroots force of three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping you stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early, helping you get well by being there for you during and after a diagnosis, by finding cures through groundbreaking discovery and fighting back through public policy. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing more than \$3.8 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, an estimated 13.7 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit <http://cancer.org>.

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