

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON  
PALLIATIVE CARE AND QUALITY OF LIFE  
NOVEMBER 22, 2019**

Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)  
The RSA Tower, Suite 1586  
Montgomery, Alabama

**Members Present**

Rodney O. Tucker, M.D., M.M.M., Chair  
Karen Marlowe, Pharm.D., Co-Chair  
Kristi A. Acker, D.N.P.  
Gregory W. Ayers, M.D. (via phone)  
Leigh Ann Matthews, M.S.N.  
Timothy Mayhall, M.Div.  
John P. Miller, M.D.  
Mary Ann Somers, M.A.Ed.

**Members Absent**

John G. Beard, M.B.A.  
Richard J. Brockman, J.D.  
Stormy Dismuke, M.S.N.  
Jimel LeShun Gibbs, M.S.N.  
Amy L. McAfee, M.S.W.

**Staff Present**

Mary G. McIntyre, M.D., M.P.H., Chief Medical Officer  
Dennis Blair, Bureau of Health Provider Standards (BHPS)  
LaKesha Hopkins, BHPS  
Faye R. Allen, BHPS

**Guests Present**

Angie Cameron Smith (Proxy for Richard J. Brockman)  
Richard Beverly, M.D.  
Danielle Larkin  
Susan McCammon, M.D.  
Lyle Walton  
Mary Ann Crow (via phone)

**CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 9, 2019:**

The Council recommended approval of the Minutes of August 9, 2019, as distributed; the motion carried unanimously.

**OPIOID PRESCRIBING AND REGULATION UPDATES (EXHIBIT “A”):**

Dr. Gregory Ayers reminded the Council that the State Committee of Public Health voted in May of 2019 to change Gabapentin to a Schedule V medication, which became effective

November 18, 2019. He said that Gabapentin had become a drug of abuse on the streets and had a street value because of its concurrent use with opioids. Dr. Ayers also discussed the Medicaid hard edits and how they do not allow physicians and nurse practitioners the ability to individualize patient care. Karen Marlowe informed the Council that ADPH now has the ability to integrate Prescription Drug Monitoring Program into most Electronic Health Records. They invested in a series of courses for providers that would take place in 2020 in Huntsville, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile. ADPH would cover the cost of these courses, and each course could accommodate 200 providers. She also gave an update on medication-assisted therapy (MAT) for prescription drug abuse as well. Dr. Ayers relayed that it was important to use the code Z51.5 for patients to be identified as a palliative care patient and receive exemption from the Medicaid hard edit.

**TRANSPORTABLE ORDERS FOR PATIENT PREFERENCES UPDATE:**

Ms. Mary Ann Crow informed the Council they now have a national form for use in all states. She will be sending the form to the Council along with the Q & A. She stated it had not been released in any venues yet, but there would be a meeting sometime in February 2020 to discuss what the approach will be.

**PALLIATIVE CARE AND TELEHEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM – COMMUNITY-BASED (VIRTUAL) ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE EXPERTISES PROGRAM (EXHIBIT “B”):**

Dr. Susan McCammon, from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Center for Palliative and Supportive Care, shared a slide presentation the Community-Based (Virtual) Access to Palliative Expertise Program with a specific focus on telehealth encounters with the county health department clinics.

**CENTER TO ADVANCE PALLIATIVE CARE REPORT CARD (EXHIBITS “C” AND “D”):**

Dr. Tucker shared a slide presentation on the Center for Advanced Palliative Care (CAPC) third State-by-State Access to Palliative Care Report Card. The information on this report card was derived from the American Hospital Association annual survey or the National Palliative Care Registry, and was based on prevalence only and on hospitals with 50 or more beds. Alabama improved from an “F” on the last report card to a “D” on this report card, which is based on data from 2017.

**PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT BILL BEFORE CONGRESS (EXHIBITS “E”, “F”, AND “G”):**

Dr. Tucker provided an update on the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act bill. He stated this was the fifth year the bill has been introduced to Congress, with bipartisan support increasing each year. The bill passed the House of Representatives easily and is currently in Committee in the Senate, but it was pulled by two senators to be marked up. Council members were encouraged to contact Alabama’s legislators to request their support of the bill.

**OTHER MEMBER DISCUSSION (EXHIBITS “H” AND “I”):**

Dr. Tucker informed the members that there was another public awareness survey report that CAPC released that would be sent to them for discussion at the February 2020 meeting. The message of the report concerns palliative care versus hospice and closely linked end of life and that it continues to be the largest barrier to both health systems and patients’ acceptability to palliative care. Dr. Tucker informed the members that their goal or purpose in February should be to chart and to decide what to support in terms of either public awareness or advocacy. He shared with the members that there was an article in the Health System Transformation series

of the Health Affairs Journal that focused on palliative care in Alabama. The article included a picture of Dr. McCammon visiting a palliative care patient in the patient's home.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

The next meeting of the Council is tentatively scheduled for February 7, 2020.

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Rodney O. Tucker, M.D., M.M.M., Chair  
State Advisory Council on Palliative Care and Quality of Life

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Dennis Blair, Director  
Bureau of Health Provider Standards  
Alabama Department of Public Health

Approved February 7, 2020