



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL
UNC SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAM
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To the Selection Committee for the UNC Improvement Scholars Program:

I am writing this letter to express my strongest possible support of Sean Gaffney, MD and Vineeta Rao, CPP and their application to the IHQI Scholars Program. Sean is the Medical Director and Vineeta is the pharmacist for our Outpatient Oncology Palliative Care practice (OOPC). Vineeta and Sean are both highly regarded within their respective departments; they are the optimal leaders for this work. I have reviewed and fully endorse their proposal to develop a multi-disciplinary, standardized approach to opioid risk mitigation in the ambulatory setting at the UNC Cancer Hospital – an important practice improvement that we have discussed as Dr. Gaffney assumed a leadership role in this practice. As Medical Director of the UNC Palliative Care & Hospice Program for the Department of Medicine, I am acutely aware of the challenges of safely using opioid medications to relieve the suffering of patients who struggle with significant cancer-related pain.

Their proposed quality improvement project aligns with our mission to provide high quality care to all patients with serious illness and their families. Their approach – developing a pharmacist-led, multi-disciplinary intervention – is rooted in the best practice guidelines for opioid harm reduction. Importantly, it is also a novel approach to leverage the scarce resource of specialists in Palliative Medicine to improve opioid safety within oncology outpatient care. I am confident that this proposal will not only improve patient safety and healthy equity within the OOPC Clinic, but that their standardized protocol will be modifiable and reproducible in other ambulatory care settings across the UNC health system.

Through my role as the project sponsor, I will assist Vineeta and Sean in navigating the larger health care system. I will ensure that they are connected to other seniors leaders in the event that their project encounters unexpected obstacles. Furthermore, I intend to meet regularly with Sean and Vineeta to provide additional quality improvement research mentorship, including advice on project design, data analysis, and eventual publication.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura C. Hanson".

Laura Hanson, MD