

# International Conference on **Hospice & Palliative Care**

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## **Cancer is stressful, but life is too: Integrating palliative care into the ongoing care of adolescent & young adult oncology patients**

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**Background:** Adolescence is a period of increasing independence and the establishment of self with separation from family and emphasis on peer-relations. Cancer complicates the achievement of these developmental norms by requiring adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients to confront the possibility of personal mortality. Survivors diagnosed as AYA have significantly greater psychological distress than those diagnosed earlier in childhood, yet little is known about variables that may contribute to development of negative psychological outcomes during this period of transition and vulnerability.

**Conclusion:** Clinicians working with AYA oncology patients should recognize the importance of comprehensive psychosocial support for this patient population that is focused not only with coping with the cancer diagnosis, but also coping in the setting of other life-stressors that overlay the cancer experience. Lessons learned from caring for this difficult patient population and ways to integrate palliative care will be shared.

### **Biography**

Justin N Baker is a pediatric oncologist, palliative care physician, member of the ethics committee and Phase I and end-of-life care clinical investigator at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. He currently serves as the Chief of the Division of Quality of Life and Palliative Care at St. Jude as well as the Medical Director of the Quality of Life Service – the St. Jude palliative care team. He also serves as the Director of the Pediatric Hematology/Oncology fellowship program. His research interests include ethical considerations surrounding enrollment in Phase I clinical trials, AYA palliative oncology care, end-of-life decision making, integrating palliative care into the ongoing care of children with cancer as well as pain and symptom control in the context of pediatric oncology care. He has participated in more than 25 studies related to pediatric palliative care and has authored numerous manuscripts and book chapters on the topics ethical decision making as well as other palliative care subjects within the context of pediatric oncology.

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