

THE KENNETH B. SCHWARTZ CENTER

Dedicated to strengthening the relationship between patients and caregivers

Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT) Children's Hospital/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Joanne Wolfe, MD, MPH

Tamara Vesel, MD

Christina K. Ullrich, MD, MPH

Janet Duncan, RN, MSN, CPNP

Marsha Joselow, MSW, LICSW, MFA

Rita Fountain

The Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT) is expert at treating hearts and souls as well as bodies. A world-renowned multidisciplinary group, its six members care for children and young adults – and their families – who suffer from advanced and often terminal illnesses, including cancer, cystic fibrosis, cardiac anomalies and brain injuries.

PACT's families are confronted with the unthinkable: hospice care for a newborn, honoring a young man's refusal to be hospitalized yet again, although he will likely die at home. "Dr. Joanne Wolfe has built this amazing team over time and instilled in them the importance of honoring life, listening to critically ill children and their parents, and helping them to ask the right questions to make some of the hardest decisions a person will ever have to make," said one patient's mother.

While on the cutting edge of palliative care, PACT's holistic approach harkens back to an earlier time. Team members manage patients' pain and symptoms while coordinating multiple aspects of their care. They visit with patients and their families at home, provide counsel and support for the many psychosocial issues that arise, connect them with other families in similar circumstances and simply help them celebrate the joy of the here and now, regardless of what the future holds.

"I've learned that over and over again the PACT members have given families the greatest gift possible in the situation of dealing with a life-limiting illness – a good death," said another patient's mother. "In guiding families through the unnatural – losing a child – their compassion provides a way for families to come to terms with the loss." Often, families' continue their relationship long after the death of their child.

The team's influence goes far beyond the local lives it has touched. PACT is transforming the field of pediatric palliative care through its fellowships, visiting scholar program and courses.