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UPMC, Mt. Lebanon hospice care provider form alliance

By Alex Nixon, PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

UPMC has formed a partnership with a Mt. Lebanon hospice and palliative care provider, the health system said on Thursday.

Family Hospice and Palliative Care, which serves nine counties in Western Pennsylvania and has offices in Manchester, Forest Hills and Hermitage, will be able to expand UPMC patients' access to its services.

UPMC does not have its own hospice agency, said Denise Stahl, executive director of UPMC's Palliative and Supportive Institute, a specialty program that focuses on finding ways to keep patients comfortable when their diseases cannot be cured.

Family Hospice physicians will receive training and other educational opportunities through the institute, and UPMC will hire and train new physicians for Family Hospice, Stahl said.

"Bringing the resources and services of UPMC and Family Hospice together will improve care for patients by helping them face this difficult time in their lives with dignity and autonomy," she said.

UPMC will provide Family Hospice with electronic health record systems.

Family Hospice has 210 employees. The partnership will not change other informal relationships Family Hospice has with local hospitals and health systems, said Greg Jena, Family Hospice manager of marketing and public relations.

Hospice care provides comfort and support to patients who no longer respond to curative measures, UPMC said. Palliative care is specialized medical care for the seriously ill, focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of their illnesses.