

DAILY NEWS

Award-winning nurse has pushed Coney Island Hospital into the forefront in care of the terminally ill

Donna Leno Gordon, nursing director for Behavioral Health at Coney Island Hospital, has received a 2012 Sloan Award for her leadership in the field of treating the terminally ill



Donna Leno Gordon, Nursing Director for Behavioral Health at Coney Island Hospital, received the Fund for the City of New York Sloan Award last week for her extensive leadership in behavioral and palliative care.

By Conor Febos
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS -- March 29, 2012

A Brooklyn nurse practitioner who has dedicated her life to helping the terminally ill is now receiving recognition from more than just her patients.

[Donna Leno Gordon](#), Nursing Director for Behavioral Health at Coney Island Hospital, received the Fund for the City of New York Sloan award last week for her extensive leadership in behavioral and palliative care.

“This award is not about me,” said Gordon, 57, about earning the city’s top public service award. “It’s about the entire palliative care field and how far it has come.”

The highly regarded distinction comes after Gordon spearheaded a program that originated in 1998 and has since revolutionized the care for terminally and chronically ill patients in New York City.

“This award recognizes Ms. Gordon’s long-standing and deep commitment to her patients as well as her innovative efforts to strive for excellence in healthcare delivery,” said Health and Hospitals Corp. [President Alan Aviles](#) in a press release. “Her dedication is inspiration to us all.”

But when Gordon initially took on the commitment to improve the state of palliative care and the treatment of the chronically ill, it did not come without obstacles. She had to acquire a keen business sense to coincide with her comprehensive medical and counseling background.

“I knew I wanted to provide a voice for terminally ill patients and their families, but it took some time to figure out how it should all be done,” said Gordon. “I knew I would need more business skills to really put the program in motion.”

In 2005, after she completed an Executive Master's in Public Administration from Baruch College, the committee designed to advance palliative care at Coney Island Hospital was officially formed.

Led by Gordon, the team turned its hospital into the local and regional leader in palliative care. In April 2010, Coney Island Hospital developed a 19-bed unit designated solely for the care of terminally ill patients that further enhanced the acute care program — an addition so successful it helped stimulate the movement for palliative programs at all other HHC hospitals.

“Donna singlehandedly changed the entire field of palliative care in the city of New York,” said Coney Island Hospital director of marketing [Gregory Maizous](#). “She has founded a multifaceted treatment program that not only benefits the patients, but looks out for their families as well.”

Gordon's achievements have assured that palliative care will remain at the forefront of health in the city and all HHC establishments.

“This kind of work in HHC is going to live on,” she said. “It's now embedded into the fabric and culture of this institution.”