

Sample Package – Claus Wirsig Humanitarian Award
(Selected from one of the Robert Salter Humanitarian Award nominees who also
“teaching the values of humanitarianism”)
Nomination with a Letter of Support

This form should be replicated/copied on computer by the nominator. The numbering and heading system shown herein should be followed:

Name of Person Being Nominated: **Melanie Kirby-Allen**
Program/Department/Division: Hematology/Oncology
Mailing Address: Clinic 8D, 555 University Avenue
Toronto, ON
Postal Code: M5G 1X8
Telephone No: 416-813-7606
Email: melanie.kirby-allen@sickkids.ca

Nominated by:

1. Name: **Nagina Parmar**
SickKids Staff Member Patient Family Member
Program/Department/Division: Hematology/Oncology
Mailing Address: Clinic 8D, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON
Postal Code: M5G 1X8
Telephone No: 416-813-6005
Email: nagina.parmar@sickkids.ca

2. Name: **Sheila Butchart**
SickKids Staff Member Patient Family Member
Program/Department/Division: Hematology/Oncology
Mailing Address: Clinic 8D, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, ON
Postal Code: M5G 1X8
Telephone No: 416-813-7499
Email: sheila.butchart@sickkids.ca

Name of Program Director or Department/Division Head that supports this nomination:

Name: Victor Blanchette
Position at SickKids: Chief, Hematology/Oncology

Please answer the following questions using as many examples as possible. Candidates about whom the Selection Committee has little information will be disadvantaged. Volunteers or teams of volunteers will have demonstrated some or all of the values listed in the questions below. The nomination must provide clear examples of how the individual or team has consistently demonstrated these qualities in an exceptional manner.

1. How long and in what capacity have you known the Nominee?

I (Sheila Butchart) have worked with Dr. Melanie Kirby in the Haematology and Oncology Program in the capacity of a Nurse Coordinator in her Haematology practice in the Out Patient clinic since 1995. It is a pleasure to be a member of her team because she is the epitome of what this award represents as she exemplifies humanitarianism not only through the care she provides to our patients but also through the utmost respect and sincere kindness with which she treats all families, colleagues, and students who she comes into contact with.

I (Nagina Parmar) have known Dr. Melanie Kirby-Allen for the past two years. I have known her since I started working with her as a clinical Coordinator. She always treated me like a colleague, and a friend who is always there for you. I feel so fortunate that I joined the Hemoglobinopathy team to work with her. Dr. Kirby is the Divisional MD responsible for the Hemoglobinopathy Program and Director of the Division's Undergraduate Program. When I saw Dr. Kirby working in the clinic I was amazed how she treated her patients with compassion and giving her attention to the families who were coming to the clinic. By watching her I remember this quote from Voltaire – "The art of medicine consists in amusing the patient while nature cures the disease". Dr. Kirby makes her patients feel at home with caring, compassionate and welcoming environment. With each patient she takes time to listen to their other personal issues other than the treatment they require. I think personally it is very important as when the doctor can really listen to the patient and therefore can provide even better care because they would understand all aspects of the patient's life other than the condition she is suffering from.

**2. Please give some examples of how the Nominee provided exceptional care and attention to families while working at SickKids?
(These values include the ability to understand, respect and support the pivotal role parents play in the lives of their children.)**

Dr. Kirby has consistently provided exceptional care and attention to our families. She makes all the patients feel special by speaking to them directly, not only to their parents, and she involves each one in his/her own care to the extent that it is possible. She asks the patients what they want and ensures they have a clear understanding of the available treatment options. She also understands, respects and supports the pivotal role parents play in the lives of their children and, realizing the impact of the child's illness on the family as a whole, she encourages them to make decisions together.

Dr. Kirby received the Hour Glass Award from the National Thalassemia Foundation of Canada in 1998. She is an expert in the area of Sickle cell and Thalassemia disease and has published and presented at various conferences. She relates to her patient as an individual and also remembers her patient's names and easily can tell what the patient condition is by just looking at the names. Sometimes patients have questions as they are doing the research of their own of the conditions they have and she counsel the patients and discuss all available treatment options with them. She is very empathetic,

supportive and compassionate towards all her patients. I remember one family with five kids and three of the kids in this family are Thalassemia major and come to hospital every month for the transfusions. Mom is the sole caregiver and father is just there to drop and pick them and has a very little role in their kids' upbringing. Due to the language issues, mom couldn't tell much of what was in her mind. But Dr. Kirby is very patient, compassionate and caring to this family. She takes time to listen to the mom very patiently and try her best to help her overcome her feelings as the mom has to take care of all the kids on her own. Mom mentioned that four years ago when her third child was born and also was diagnosed with Thalassemia and then she was so upset, sad and depressed, Dr. Kirby personally helped her to the best she can by arranging transportation and helping her understand the procedures and prescriptions medicine for the child. Dr. Kirby personally feels that if she could help this mom then she will think her job is done. She always thinks about her patients ahead of everything. Even in the middle of the meeting if she ever gets paged she leaves everything and answers her page and sometimes personally goes to the wards to calm and satisfy her patients and their parents.

Dr. Kirby has recently started caring for a teenage female with ITP who is a competitive ringette player who was very upset and disappointed when Dr. Kirby informed her that she would not be able to play when her platelet count falls below a specific count. However, after further discussion with the patient and her mother Dr. Kirby realized the importance of individualizing the treatment for the patient's well-being by increasing the threshold for treatment. Now the patient receives treatment at a slightly higher level than what is usual and although she needs to come to the clinic approximately every four weeks she is extremely grateful to be allowed to do what she loves to do.

After seeing patients, if they are age appropriate, Dr. Kirby takes the young ones by the hand and takes them for a special walk to the room with the sticker box where she lets them choose stickers. If the sibling(s) have come to the appointment they are also invited to go along or Dr. Kirby gives extra stickers for the sibling(s) who have been left at home. Although her clinics are very busy she takes the time for this special gesture which brings a big smile to the patients.

Dr. Kirby is a big promoter of reading and takes the time to ask the children if they like to read inquiring as to what they are reading. During the Harry Potter craze one of our patients was voraciously reading through the books in the series. Dr. Kirby was thrilled that this young boy loved to read, however at the rate he was going through them she was concerned that the mother, whose finances were limited, was spending money she really couldn't afford so she informed her that the books were available to borrow from our hospital library. This mother was very grateful to her. Dr. Kirby has expressed a dream to establish a program to promote literacy. Currently she brings books from home and she also purchases books out of her own pocket which she gives to the patients. She derives such pleasure and satisfaction from this seemingly simple act.

3. Demonstrate how the Nominee understands the social, emotional and developmental impact of illness and hospitalization on the child and family. (These values include providing care that is developmentally appropriate, psychosocially sound, culturally sensitive and family-centered.)

Dr. Kirby understands the social, emotional and developmental impact of illness on the child and family. She takes the age and lifestyle of the child into consideration and tailors the treatment, where feasible, to enable the child to live as normal a life as

possible without interference from their illness. Many of our patients have a condition called ITP, or Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura, in which the platelets, blood cells which promote clotting and help stop bleeding, are abnormally low. Depending on the level of the platelet count this condition can place restrictions on the child's activities, particularly contact sports such as hockey and skiing. There is treatment available for ITP but its effect is temporary, rather than curative, and is generally only used when the platelet count falls to a dangerously low level. However, as Dr. Kirby considers the whole picture of the illness and the social and emotional impact it has she may recommend treatment in certain situations where she knows it would benefit the child. For example, for some children who have the opportunity to go on a school ski trip she is very supportive and advocates that the child be permitted to go after receiving treatment to raise the platelet count to a safe level to avoid risk and allay any concern. The parents and children are very appreciative of Dr. Kirby's gentle guidance and her support and compassion for the child.

4. *How does the individual collaborate and communicate meaningfully with patients and families?*

(These values include the ability to recognize and respect the individuality of each patient and his/her unique and changing needs and to support the autonomy of patients and families, as well as respect and support the unique coping methods of each child and family.)

Dr. Kirby supports the autonomy of patients and families and is always willing to accommodate the family's school and work schedule when booking appointments. It is her selfless nature to place the patient's and family's best interest at heart and she never considers it an inconvenience when she needs to make an extra trip from her office to come to the clinic to see a patient on a non clinic day if this works better for them.

Dr. Kirby fully recognizes and respects the individuality of each patient and his/her unique and changing needs. She is interested in their academic progress as well as their career aspirations and takes the time to discuss their future career paths and offers valued advice. She desires the best for her patients in all aspects of their lives and she is very devoted to the patients and families that she cares for.

Dr. Kirby respects and supports the unique coping methods of each patient and family. Recently a child was referred to our clinic on a non-urgent basis though Dr. Kirby felt compelled to see the patient as soon as possible when she learned of the extenuating family circumstances in which another child in the family is being treated as SickKids in our program for cancer. Dr. Kirby empathized with the family and understood the anxiety they must have been feeling. At the consultation appointment she also took the opportunity to not only address the haematological issue that brought this child to our clinic which fortunately required no further follow up but to inform the child and mother of the support group that is available to siblings of children with cancer that is offered in our program. She strongly encouraged them to consider it because she believed it would prove to be very beneficial in this time of crisis.

5. *What differentiates this individual apart from other staff in terms of acting above and beyond what is expected of them?*

There are so many situations that position Dr. Kirby apart from other staff in terms of acting above and beyond what is expected of them. Another example is of a

hospitalized teenage patient who was soon to be discharged yet continued to feel nauseous for no identified reason. She mentioned that she had recently become aware of Gravol lozenges containing ginger which are effective in controlling nausea. She was concerned that he would not have the money to purchase them himself so she decided she would visit him and take some to him. Even though Dr. Kirby has an extremely busy schedule she will always take the time to make a difference in someone's life.

Dr. Kirby creates a caring, supportive and welcoming environment for all staff. She especially ensures that Fellows, Residents, Medical Students, and Medical Observers receive the best, comprehensive learning experience beyond their placement in our clinic. She takes them under her wing nurturing them and ensures they are aware of all the opportunities that are open to them. She also takes a personal interest in them and during holiday periods she will ask those whom she knows are from out of country and/or without family whether they have a place to go or someone to spend the holiday with and, for those who don't, she invites them to her home to join her family for a meal. This is a mark of an extraordinary woman who goes beyond what is expected and who puts others ahead of herself. In view of the fact that she spends much of her time at the hospital away from her family while also raising her three children it is quite remarkable that she selflessly opens her home to others and welcomes them in.

**6. How does this individual work with other members of the team?
(These values include collaborating and communicating meaningfully with all members of the interdisciplinary team.)**

Dr. Kirby works exceptionally well with every team member and makes them feel valued. She is consistent and fair treating everyone equally and with enormous respect and she is also very well respect. Apart from her Haematology clinic Dr. Kirby is also Co-Director of the Haemoglobinopathy Program which consists of the Sickle Cell Program and the Thalassemia Program. In this Program she works with four Physicians, three Clinic Nurse Coordinators, and Research Nurse, a Clinical Research Associate and a Social Worker. Given her large portfolio it is not uncommon for her to have a line up of staff requiring her attention at the same time. She patiently, without getting flustered, attends to each one on an individual basis giving her undivided attention and the time that is required. She exhibits professional behavior tempered by humility in all situations.

Dr. Kirby is a very good team player. She listens to the other team members and respect their opinions, issues and concerns. Sometimes there is an argument within the team during the team meetings but she is always calm and identifies the issue and addresses it accordingly. She always takes time to listens and sometimes guides the tem if the need arises. She always encourages other team members to participate in workshops, seminars, and conferences for professional development.

7. Has the Nominee used his or her professional experience in the Hospital to help the community? i.e. – is there anything that would be relevant to humanitarianism – for example volunteer work?

Dr. Kirby has a big role in establishing and organization of Camp Jumoke. Presently she is the Medical Director of the Camp Jumoke. Camp Jumoke is the only camp in Canada that serves the unique emotional and health-care needs of these children. Any child with sickle cell disease between the ages of 8 and 16 is eligible to attend Camp Jumoke,

where camp counselors are trained to work with our children, in coordination with staff of health care professionals. One of the kids who went to Camp Jumoke wrote in her own special way that how the camp has made her gain confidence, and got encouragement for living her life on her own. She wrote "Through my years at Camp Jumoke I have begun to experience sickle cell in a new way. While the physical effects of sickle cell are still solitary, the emotional effects have stopped being so lonely. At Camp Jumoke I was no longer the only person with an illness. I lived in a cabin for two weeks with other kids who take medication, have pain, and stay at the hospital for what could be long periods of time. I was no longer alone. These were people who needed no explanation about why I wasn't allowed to swim. They had probably been subjected to extreme layers when winter came along, for their own health, and understood the frustration that came along with missing a lot of school. Camp Jumoke has become a safe haven for me, where I'm not necessarily sick, just special." Every summer Dr. Kirby makes sure that the kids and their parents know about this camp and encourage parents to send their children so that they can get the wonderful experience at the camp and forget about their disease and enjoy the summer like other normal kids. Dr. Kirby also volunteers her time during the summer at camp.

Dr. Kirby is very selfless, often giving up and devoting her personal time for the patient community by attending conferences and fundraisers for the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada. Dr. Kirby also assists the Foundation in answering questions and offering resources to requests we receive from parents outside of Canada. Additionally, Dr. Kirby was part of the development of the new thalassemia guidelines, which will now offer a standard of care for other health care providers who treat thalassemia patients in Canada.

8. *Has the Nominee taught others these values in a meaningful way? If yes, please give examples.*

Dr. Kirby tries her best to instill the message to her colleagues and other team members in a very meaningful way. She is very professional in the sense that by making sure that other team members remember that treatment of patients is the foremost responsibility of each and every member. She has taught various courses in Pediatrics in the hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto. She has also supervised fellows and residents during their training programme. Dr. Kirby has been honored with various awards for an excellence in teaching.

Dr. Kirby has been a mentor to many medical students, residents and fellows. She takes an active interest in trainee education and participates in curriculum development. She also supports trainees through both formal and informal mentoring. Many fellows see Dr. Kirby as an inspiring role model and advocate.

Dr. Kirby has a commitment to providing compassionate and excellent care to patients and their families, a role model as a physician leading a multidisciplinary team who at all times exemplifies the highest standards of professional conduct tempered by humility.



January 30, 2009

555 University Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1X8

To Whom it may concern:

RE: DR. MELANIE KIRBY

It is with great confidence that we, the fellows in the Paediatric Haematology/Oncology Fellowship Program at The Hospital for Sick Children, support the nomination of Dr. Melanie Kirby for the Salter Humanitarian Award. Dr. Kirby is a wonderful clinician, an excellent teacher and true role model who is worthy of this award.

First and foremost, Dr. Kirby is an exemplary clinician and a caring physician. In her interactions with parents and patients, she always treats people warmly and compassionately. She puts patients first and makes herself available outside of routine hours for patient concerns, both medical and social. She has a special ability to connect with children and young adults. She is instrumental in helping patients to cope with their illnesses and establishes a warm rapport that is long-lasting and often extends beyond their time at Sick Kids. Her dedication reaches beyond the hospital walls as she was instrumental in developing a camp for children with Sickle Cell Disease and continues to act as the camp Medical Director. Furthermore, she is a superb patient advocate who supported the implementation of newborn screening for Sickle Cell disease, an initiative which has resulted in earlier diagnosis and treatment for children with this serious condition.

In addition to being a wonderful clinician, Dr. Kirby is a great teacher. Throughout fellowship we have benefited from Dr. Kirby's outstanding teaching skills. Dr. Kirby is a natural teacher and is dedicated to instructing trainees both formally and informally. As a skilled communicator, she has the unique ability to impart information, taking often the most difficult and obtuse concepts and presenting them in the simplest terms so that even the lay person could learn. She always finds time for education, even during very busy clinics. She understands the learner's needs and is able to cater each lesson to the level of the trainee. Dr. Kirby's teaching abilities were recognized in 2004, when she won the fellows' annual teaching award. This is given based on the votes of fellows and is awarded to the attending physician felt to be the best in the division.

Over the years, Dr. Kirby has been a mentor to many medical students, residents and fellows. She takes an active interest in trainee education and participates in curriculum development. She also supports trainees through both formal and informal mentoring. Many fellows see Dr. Kirby as an inspiring role model and advocate.

Sincerely,

Vicky Breakey, M.D.

On behalf of the Fellows in the Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Fellowship Program
The Hospital for Sick Children