

# TANENBAUM CENTER FOR INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

**Contact:** Cara Haberman

[chaberman@tanenbaum.org](mailto:chaberman@tanenbaum.org)

212.967.7707 x104

**\*\* Press Release \*\***

## ***Edmond de Rothschild Foundations Supports Expansion of Tanenbaum's Health Care Residency Program***

**New York, New York – April 16, 2011:** The Edmond de Rothschild Foundations have granted \$340,000 to the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding for a four-year initiative to improve health care for patients from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds. With this grant, Tanenbaum is pioneering a curriculum on religio-cultural competency for medical residents in partnership with Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center.

This project incorporates skills-based training in religio-cultural competence into medical education. This new curriculum is designed for medical residency programs and prepares health care providers to improve patient-centered care by learning:

- How religious and cultural beliefs impact patients' medical decisions;
- Ways to respectfully solicit pertinent information about patients' religious beliefs and practices; and,
- How to respond appropriately when religion influences health decisions.

Religious issues arise in health care settings in a wide range of ways that are often unanticipated by doctors. Yet, in a national survey sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation in 2003, 20% of residents in their final year of training still felt unprepared to treat patients with religious beliefs that affected care and 50% reported that their training in relevant religious beliefs was "minimal."

In 2001, Tanenbaum thus coined the term "religio-cultural competence" to help highlight this issue within the field and to establish the need to address religion as an essential element of cultural competence, caring attitudes and patient-centered care.

When providers ignore the health-related religious beliefs and practices of their patients, the resulting disparities affect care and medical outcomes. In one instance, Muslim women would not frequent a local hospital in Maine unless it was an emergency. After discovering the women had modesty concerns about the revealing hospital gowns and offering a gown that provided more coverage, the hospital saw an increase in admissions. In other cases, hospitals have been sued for not understanding and respecting the religious preferences of their Jewish patients when it came to porcine-based medications or transplants, and Catholic patients have refused treatment for endometriosis because it often involves taking oral contraceptives.

Religious beliefs also influence treatment options and care on a regular basis when it comes to issues such as abortion, contraception, organ transplant, life support and rituals surrounding birth and death.

Tanenbaum will use its action-driven trainings in religio-cultural diversity to drive the project at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital, which will result in a new educational model for how to provide training for residents, medical students, and nurses in religio-cultural competency. The partnership with the de Rothschild Foundations is enabling Tanenbaum to develop a customized resident and staff curriculum to incorporate into the hospital's existing residency program, and Tanenbaum staff will train the hospital's medical faculty to deliver the program to future residents in a sustainable way.

The project will result in a new and replicable model for the next generation of health providers. Once complete, this model will have the potential to impact medical professionals being trained in hospitals across the country and for generations to come.

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The **Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding** is a secular, non-sectarian organization that promotes mutual respect with practical programs that bridge religious difference and combat prejudice in areas of armed conflict, schools, workplaces, and health care settings.

The **Edmond de Rothschild Foundations** defends the dignity and empowerment of each individual. Through their geographic locations and range of projects, the Foundations represent a rich, multicultural network encompassing initiatives in Geneva, Paris, New York, London, Jerusalem, Barcelona, Bombay, Capetown and beyond. The Foundations' primary focus is on education, with projects in a range of areas including arts and culture, social entrepreneurship, intercultural dialogue, health and research.