In an age of increasingly aggressive treatments and therapies, how might we think about the undersold field of palliative medicine, a subspecialty that is devoted not to curing a disease, but rather to sustaining a life? It pushes us to think differently about the nature of medicine and the role of involvement.

Dr. Pollack was recently involved in the creation of a course titled “Life at the End of Life” at Columbia, which was offered for the first time last Fall. In addition to awarding students credit for volunteer service, the class also provided a forum to discuss those same issues of how to maintain a quality of life and the role of companionship in end-of-life care. Columbia’s intimate partnership with Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center (TCC), a nursing home in Harlem, showcases the belief that intergenerational communities have something unique to offer, and demonstrates the willingness of students to participate in them.