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# Narrative Medicine Mini-Elective

Spring 2017

<u>Course Dates:</u>	April 4, 11, 18, 25, May 2 Tuesdays, 6:00-7:30 PM
<u>Maximum Students:</u>	10
<u>Class Year:</u>	MS1
<u>Course Director:</u>	Ben Miller, M.D. Alexandra Dreyzin, M.D.
<u>Contact Information:</u>	Alexandra Dreyzin, M.D. <a href="mailto:alexandra.dreyzin@chp.edu">alexandra.dreyzin@chp.edu</a>
<u>Registration:</u>	Betsy Nero, Office of Medical Education <a href="mailto:betsy@medschool.pitt.edu">betsy@medschool.pitt.edu</a>

## Description:

As physicians, we have the privilege of hearing many different stories from our patients, ranging from the everyday to some of the most significant experiences of people's lives. Sometimes, we are able to intervene in these stories, but more often than not, our role is to bear witness to them. Narrative medicine provides us with a new framework for understanding patients' experiences as well as our own experiences as health care providers. It teaches doctors to listen to patient's stories, to translate them into written or oral forms, and in doing so, to establish personal connections to these patients.

This course will allow medical students to practice the skills of narrative medicine while interacting with patients. They will first be introduced to history-taking skills from the perspective of a journalistic, rather than a medical, interview. In the following sessions, they will meet with a patient (or family, in the case of pediatric patients) and have the opportunity to practice these interviewing skills. Students will then write and share a short piece describing their interpretation of the patient's experience. The goal of this course is for the practice and appreciation for storytelling to be integrated into students' history-taking skills as they progress in their medical education.

## Objectives:

1. To introduce students to the principles of narrative medicine
2. To complete a patient interview with a narrative framework
3. To produce a short write-up of the interview and share the interview experience with others in the course

## Requirements:

Attend sessions 1-2 and 4-5, participate in patient interview; session 3 is optional.

## Pre-Requisites:

None.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **NARRATIVE MEDICINE**

**Day of week and time of day:**

Tuesdays—6:00-7:30 PM

**Class location:**

Scaife Hall Rooms 512 and 513

**Course Director(s):**

Alexandra Dreyzin, MD

**Participating Faculty:**

Ben Miller, MD

**Course Objectives:**

1. To introduce students to the principles of narrative medicine
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**Texts/Required Reading:**

No required reading, but the following narrative medicine pieces will be provided as examples.

"The Importance of Being" by Abraham Verghese from *Health Affairs*

"Abraham Verghese, Author of 'Cutting for Stone' describes his writing life" from *The Washington Post*

"Close Calls" by Perri Klass from *NEJM*

"When a Patient is dying, Food Appears" by Daniela Lamas in the New York Times Well column

"The Lost Mariner" by Oliver Sacks from *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*

"Nourishment" by Ranjana Sristave in *NEJM*

**Session One** – The first session will be an introduction to narrative medicine, in which we will establish the basic framework. We will have a brief discussion of student's prior experience with writing and goals for this course. A guest speaker (TBD - a professor from the University of Pittsburgh who teaches creative non-fiction) will give a brief talk introducing basics of conducting and writing an interview.

**Session Two** – Students will go to Montefiore or CHP to interview a patient or family. Patients will be selected with the help of residents who have been working with them throughout the day. The goal of the interview will be to gain an understanding of the patient's experience of their illness or hospitalization, without necessarily obtaining the details of their medical history.

**Session Three** – optional – Since this course does require students to do some writing outside of the official meetings times, we will offer a free-writing session. Students can use this as a planned, finite time to write, with no expectations that they will work on their essays outside of this. Sample pieces will be provided, and course director(s) will be available to help brainstorm or workshop ideas.

**Session Four** – Peer-editing/workshop session. We will have a peer-editing session in which students will be paired or broken into small groups. They will share drafts of their interviews and will work together to document their experiences in a compelling form.

**Session Five** – In the last session, students will share excerpts from their writing with the group. We will have a wrap-up discussion about how this experience will affect future patient interactions. In addition, for those who are interested in submitting their completed work, students will be provided with a list of journals and websites that publish medical essays.