



Professional Enrichment Course

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Office of Medical Education

Medical Advocacy Writing

Enrollment Period:	Spring 2024
Course Dates:	February 26, 27, 28, 29, March 1 10am-12pm
Student Max:	20 students
Class Year:	MS1
Course Director:	April Flynn a.flynn@pitt.edu
Course Administrator:	Sharon Kim shk112@pitt.edu
Location:	TBD
Registration:	Via Qualtrics – You will receive an email with enrollment info
Course Description:	<p>As of March 2022, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has been holding over 20,000 people in detainment centers. In contrast to those who have been arrested on criminal charges, immigrant detainees are not guaranteed healthcare and often face challenges in addressing medical needs. With their expertise and authority, physicians are in a unique position to advocate for the medically vulnerable. Thus, this course will cover effective strategies to write persuasively for the medical needs of people in immigrant detainment centers, with a focus on influencing public opinion through op-eds. Participants will learn techniques for framing an issue, structuring an argument, and enhancing message delivery as they work collaboratively to create publication-ready medical advocacy editorials. Students will leave these sessions with a fully written and workshopped advocacy piece on a topic of their choice.</p>
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Survey the current state of medical care for people in US immigrant detainment centers, with a focus on identifying specific problems and objectives for medical advocacy.2. Understand key principles in persuasive written communication and learn strategies for framing a specific issue.3. Analyze the structure of an editorial argument with attention to rhetorical efficacy.4. Investigate other strategies for enhancing message delivery.

	5. Develop, critique, and revise op-ed drafts. 6. Learn about the publication process for op-eds as well as other venues for medical advocacy.
Pre-Requisites:	None
Requirements:	None
Texts:	None

Overview:

Session 1: Overview of the Current State of Medical Care for People in US Immigrant Detainment Centers, with a Focus on Identifying Specific Problems and Objectives for Medical Advocacy. (Feb 26)

Students will be given a brief overview of the current state of medical care for people in US immigrant detainment centers, with a focus on identifying specific problems and objectives for medical advocacy. Discussion will focus on conditions in detainment centers, systemic factors influencing medical care, and types of medical challenges faced by people living in immigrant detainment centers. We will also discuss strategies for research and for writing in an informed, data-driven way. Students will begin to identify specific issues that they would like to make the focus of their own advocacy along with angles for their persuasive appeals.

Readings:

- Dr. Mona Hanna Attisha’s efforts to educate and raise awareness about the Flint water crisis: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/06/25/623126968/pediatrician-who-exposedflint-water-crisis-shares-her-story-of-resistance>)
- Examples of Dr. Attisha’s op-eds:
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/12/opinion/sunday/flint-inequality-racecoronavirus.html>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/27/opinion/lead-water-flint.html>

Session 2: Key Principles in Persuasive Written Communication (Feb 27)

We will discuss key principles in persuasive written communication and learn strategies for framing a specific issue. Concepts from applied rhetoric—purpose, audience, context—will be used as a basis for determining approach, structure, and style of persuasive appeals. We will talk about identifying a strategic choice of audience and a strategic message: What do you want to persuade people of? What is the solution you are advocating for? Who are the decision makers or other influential people in this issue? Who would be the best choice as a target for your appeal? We will examine argumentative structures and their translation to the context of op-ed writing, and we will analyze the structure of a published op-ed with attention to framing, structure, and style. Students will share and critique their “elevator pitches,” and, if

time allows, they will work in small groups to create collaborative flash op-eds. There will also be active writing time for students to begin drafting their editorials.

Assignment: Come to Session 2 with a specific issue you would like to address in your op-ed, a specific argument stemming from that issue, and an “elevator pitch” version of your issue/argument.

Reading:

- The Editorial Board. Opinion. The New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/19/opinion/trump-medicine-data-hhs-ahrq.html>
Published July 20, 2018. (A pdf will be made available.)

Session 3: Op-Ed Draft Critiques and Other Strategies for Enhancing Message Delivery. (Feb 28)

Most of this session will be given over to sharing and critiques of op-ed drafts. Students will exchange their op-ed drafts in small groups and provide feedback to guide revisions. We will also discuss other ways to enhance the effectiveness of medical advocacy writing, such as techniques for effective storytelling and tips for enhancing clarity and flow. There will be more active writing time for developing and/or revising drafts.

Assignment: Come to Session 3 with the draft of your op-ed for sharing and critique. (You don’t need to print out copies of your draft. You can just upload your draft as a Google Doc and share the link on this page.)

Reading: Read and prepare feedback for the drafts of people in your critique group.

Session 4: Getting Your Message into the Public Conversation—The Op-Ed Publication Process and Beyond (Feb 29)

We will review key takeaways from the previous sessions and compile advice based on what we have learned through undertaking this process. Students will share their revised drafts and learn about the publication process for op-eds as well as other venues for medical advocacy such as letters to public representatives and policy makers. We will discuss ways to identify and select publication venues, and students will learn best practices for “pitching” op-eds to editors. We will consider crowdsource sites like KevinMD, Doximity, medium.com, Pittsburgh Gazette, Public Source, and other newspapers and magazines.

Assignment: Come to Session 4 with a polished/revised draft of your op-ed.

Reading:

- How to place an op-ed in your local newspaper. MoveOn: People-Powered Progress. Published December 4, 2015. <https://front.moveon.org/how-to-place-an-op-ed-in-your-local-newspaper/>

- Golash-Boza T. How to Submit an OpEd to a Major Newspaper. Get a life, PhD. Blogspot.com. <http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2013/09/how-to-submit-oped-to-major-newspaper.html>

Session 5: Applying Your Skills in the Real World and in Your Careers - Guest Speaker: Dr. Maya Ragavan, MD, MPH,MS (March 1)

We are excited to host Dr. Maya Ragavan as a guest speaker. Dr. Ragavan is an assistant professor of pediatrics in the Division of General Academic Pediatrics. Her research interests focus on preventing intimate partner violence (IPV), engaging parents in supporting their adolescent-age children in developing healthy romantic relationships, community based participatory research (CBPR), and language equity in research, and she does a lot of work with communities who speak languages other than English. She is engaged in work beyond the medical field and has ample experience with political advocacy and writing. She will touch on some of her experiences as both a physician and a human rights advocate for this session.

Assignment: Be prepared to ask questions if you have any!