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# Narrative Medicine Professional Enrichment Course Spring 2021

<u>Course Dates:</u>	April 1, 8, 22, 29, May 6 Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 PM
<u>Maximum Students:</u>	10
<u>Class Year:</u>	MS1
<u>Course Director:</u>	Ben Miller, M.D. (Diagnostic Referral Svcs. CHP) Alexandra Dreyzin, M.D. Priya Marathe, MD
<u>Contact Information:</u>	Joseph Israel, M.D. <a href="mailto:joseph.israel@chp.edu">joseph.israel@chp.edu</a>
<u>Registration:</u>	Denise Downs, Office of Medical Education ddowns@pitt.edu

## 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 patients and have the opportunity to practice these interviewing skills. Students will then select an advocacy topic drawn from their interviews and compose an Op-Ed piece that connects their patient's story to a broader issue. 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 all sessions (via Zoom), participate in patient interview.

## Pre-Requisites:

None.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **NARRATIVE MEDICINE**

**April 1, 8, 22, 29, May 6**

Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 PM

#### **Class location:**

Remote via Zoom

#### **Course Director(s):**

Elizabeth Harrison, MD

Joseph Israel, MD

Alyssa Vigliotti, MD

#### **Participating Faculty:**

Ben Miller, MD

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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 (via Zoom)** – The first session will be an introduction to narrative medicine, in which we will establish the basic framework. A guest speaker (TBD - a professor from the University of Pittsburgh who teaches creative non-fiction) will give a brief talk, introducing the basics of conducting and writing an interview. We will then complete an interviewing practice session and compare journalistic interviewing techniques with those used in the medical interview.

**Session Two (via Telephone and Zoom)** – Students will be paired with a patient or family at CHP and will conduct a brief interview over the phone. We will then gather via Zoom to debrief about these conversations and to practice finding themes or advocacy topics based on interviews.

**Session Three (In-Person Interview)** – Students will conduct a prolonged interview with a different patient or family, this time in person while using appropriate social distancing and masks/PPE. 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 Four (via Zoom)** – Peer-editing/workshop session. We will have a group session in which students can help one another workshop written accounts of their patient interview.

**Session Five (via Zoom)** – 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.