

# NARRATIVE MEDICINE

At Columbia University Medical Center

GAIN THE SKILLS AND VALUES OF NARRATIVE UNDERSTANDING  
IN PATIENT CARE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION.

## Faculty Development at P&S

With funding from NIH/ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the Program in Narrative Medicine has designed and executed an intensive faculty development program for those physicians who teach students the skills of the clinical transaction of interviewing, diagnostic reasoning, and the physical examination. We train the teachers, who then teach the medical students through the four years of medical school, in attentive listening, close reading, and creative writing. The 10-year grant has mentored at least 100 physicians over the years. They recognize that their training in narrative skills has made them better teachers and, they insist, better doctors. See Devlin M et al, "Where Does the Circle End? Representation as a Critical Aspect of Reflection in Teaching Social and Behavioral Sciences in Medicine," *Academic Psychiatry* 2014, in press.

## Medical School Courses

We have gradually achieved a required curriculum in Narrative Medicine, funded by NIH/ (NHLBI), at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University (P&S). Each year, first year medical students are required to enroll in a Narrative Medicine Seminar. These are half-semester intensive small-group seminars in literary studies, creative writing, visual arts, and qualitative social sciences. They are taught by scholars with the terminal degree in their discipline. Visual arts seminars take place in museums—the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Frick Collection—or in art studios. Our writing seminars are taught by world-class novelists and poets and essayists. Several physicians on the faculty enroll in these seminars to study along with their students. See Miller E & al, "Sounding Narrative Medicine," *Academic Medicine* 2013;89 (2), for a study of the consequences of this work. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24362390>

## Narrative Medicine Elective

Fourth-year medical students can enroll in a Narrative Medicine elective in Narrative Medicine. This elective is a whole month of reading, writing, and creative work with members of the faculty. The elective includes a contemporary fiction seminar, an intensive fiction writing workshop, a seminar on clinical transference and counter-transference, and a graphics novel course. It is a month of creativity and introspection. Students from other medical schools are accepted, space permitting. See Arntfield S et al, Narrative Medicine as a Means of Training Medical Students toward Residency Competencies, Patient Education and Counseling 91 (2013) 280–286. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2013.01.014>

## P&S Scholarly Projects

P&S students are required to complete a Scholarly Project in order to graduate. A substantive research or academic project, this project can be accomplished in one of 6 Concentration Tracks. One of them is the Narrative & Social Medicine Tracks. Medical students can devote from four to nine months to projects in creative or narrative projects that focus on or in some way illuminate the lived experience of patients or clinicians. Projects have included literary scholarship, the creation of art work, musical compositions, fiction, and memoir. Dr. Charon is the Track Director for Narrative & Social Medicine.

## Interprofessional Education at CUMC

With funding from the Macy Foundation, the Program directs a health care team effectiveness training program. This collaborative project engages all four health professions schools of CUMC: the College of Dental Medicine, P&S, the School of Nursing, and Mailman School of Public Health. Narrative Medicine faculty and Masters of Narrative Medicine train doctors, nurses, dentists, and public health professionals in intensive and demanding and credit-bearing courses in Narrative Medicine.

## Narrative Medicine Seminars in Clinical Departments

The Narrative Medicine team teaches intensive seminars to members of clinical sections who request them. We are currently teaching to a variety of clinical learners. Typically, we meet with members of the section once or twice a month for disciplined work in reading and writing. Currently, we are working with the Department of Pediatrics, the Department of Medicine, the Department of Radiology, the Child Psychiatry Fellowship, the Social Work Services, the Physical Therapy Program, and the Palliative Care Service. In each of these, we encourage creative writing from the members of the clinical sections.

## Student Groups

We are honored to work with student groups from many of the professional schools in the medical center. These include the Reflexion literary journal, the Columbia Medical Review journal, TEDMED programs, and the CoSMOS student-staffed clinic for uninsured patients.