Narrative Palliative Care Workshop
An Advanced Narrative Medicine Workshop
March 22 - 25, 2018

Participant Bios

Marie Barnett
I am a clinical psychologist working with children, adolescents, and young adults during cancer treatment, survivorship, and end of life. The experience can often, and at best be described through metaphor, stories, and the "indescribable". My goal is to bring Narrative Medicine and the practice to both my work and the medical fellows and residents training experience.

Helen Cluett
I’m a family physician with an interest in how people interpret their experience. I do a lot of palliative care in many contexts. I noted particularly the stories emerging (from families, caregivers, staff) at our residential hospice.

Natalie Compagni Portis
In my work with those with life threatening illness, loss and bereavement, my study of narrative medicine has allowed me to deepen my work and give depth to my work with physicians in assisting them to feel more supported in their work and more effective in their work with patients.

Joannah Cook
My interest in Narrative Medicine began when I attended a Spiritual Care Week lecture by Dr. Rita Charon in Atlanta. I remember being so thrilled to hear about this field of study because it encompassed so much of my passion for listening to and responding to stories of illness. I continued my learning through reading articles and books, as well as attending another workshop led by Dr. Charon at Emory University. In 2016, I participated in the Summer Institute at Columbia and one year ago I began a writing group for patients at the hospital where I serve in Georgia. I look forward to continuing to sharpen my skills through the Advanced Workshop and bringing what I learn back to my palliative care team.
Karen Cook
I have used narrative medicine readings and practices to look for what is unseen and unsaid in my practice and research, and to be open to unusual and paradoxical ways of understanding patient perspectives. My work with young adults with life limiting conditions is always alarming and refreshing. However, when my husband died suddenly and unexpectedly last year, I was hurled into an abyss where very little of my compassionate knowledge and curiosity, and even experiences with my own parents’ deaths were helpful. I look forward to revisiting narrative medicine in this workshop and the journey that will follow.

Bronwyn Cooper
This is my third workshop at Columbia in Narrative Medicine. Sometime in the near future I would like to get my Certificate and teach medical students and residents the subject.

Alexis Drutchas
I am a Family Medicine Physician in Boston. Writing with a framework of narrative medicine is a way I reflect, see and understand the further meaning in my clinical work.

Debra Dusome
I attended the Basic Narrative Medicine workshop almost two and a half years ago and felt like I had found my people from all over the world. I have been a fan of Narrative Medicine since 2006 when I read Rita Charon’s Honoring the Stories of Illness. I am a psychiatric nurse and expressive arts therapist and my careers have centered around listening to and working with people’s stories.

Gretchen Henry-Connelly
I quite enjoyed my only experience with narrative medicine, which was taking the basic workshop in November 2017. My background is in the arts - particularly theatre and dance. For the past few years I have found work creating and officiating at personalized non-denominational ceremonies.

Luigia Iamele
I’m working in an Italian hospital, in Bergamo, near Milano and I am responsible for the Public Relations Office. During my work I’m concerned with the storytelling of patients or caregivers. I’m very busy listening to their feelings, their thoughts about illness or death….For this reason, I’m very interested in narrative medicine. In October 2015 I attended the Basic Workshop. It was an amazing experience and helped me and now I can give this to our patients.

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Nancy Iverson
I participated in a Columbia University Narrative Medicine workshop in 2007. I have used learning from that in my work with pediatric palliative care, bereavement groups, and as a faculty member for the Healer’s Art at UCSF.

Syl Jones
I founded the narrative medicine program at HCMC and am the Director of Narrative Health and Medicine and am part of our executive team. I have written a play about palliative care for the Minnesota Palliative Care and Hospice Association.

Jacqueline Kolosov
I am a writer and creative writing professor with a visual arts background. This year I am directing a $47,000 grant from The CH Foundation that brings arts programming to four populations, one of which is palliative/supportive care. I am training graduate students and undergraduates to work as artists in residence with this population as well as with pediatric patients, veterans and at risk teens.

Kelly Cronin Komatz
I am a full-time practicing pediatrician who cares for children with life-limiting conditions. I am board certified in hospice/palliative medicine as a general pediatrician. I have already completed the introductory narrative medicine course and found that narrative medicine is what I do every day at least once a day. I listen. I listen to the caregivers’ stories. I listen to the patient’s stories if they are capable of sharing. And I listen to the others involved in caring for these children who will not survive to adulthood.

Yukie Kurihara
I am a clinical social worker and educator, working in the field of Palliative/End of Life Care. I have been in this field for the past 25 years, including working in the U.S (here in NYC) and in Japan. I have been doing workshops on grief and bereavement, communication, and self-care/contemplative care for patients/families as well as health care professionals. I took courses of the M.S. program of Narrative Medicine in this past Fall and enjoyed every minute of it. I am also happy to be back to NYC where I studied and worked back in the ‘90s, bringing back all the fond memories.

Mary Lincoln
My previous experience with Narrative Medicine has made me want to go further with this; I think I have an ideal combination of skills and experiences to do so.

Mellen Lovrin
I attended the Basic Narrative Medicine Workshop Oct 2016. The group I was assigned to bonded almost instantly and an open and trusting relationship facilitated a deep sharing of our writing.

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Michael McIntyre
I have attended one previous workshop and have integrated extensive personal study of Narrative Medicine into my teaching. For example, in a course in psychoneuroimmunology, a focus on the relationship between narrative and health is a major focus. I also teach several mindfulness-based interventions all of which are influenced and enriched by my work in Narrative Medicine. My research investigates the efficacy of several interventions in reducing stress and promoting well-being in a variety of groups including both healthcare workers and patients. My fMRI research is beginning to investigate the brain bases of these behavioural affects.

Jennifer Moore
I have had the pleasure to attend the Basic Narrative Medicine workshop in 2012 and an Advanced Workshop in 2014. I have also been working on strategies to use Narrative Medicine in my teaching with the Palliative Medicine Residency at the University of Toronto.

Meral Omurtag
My formal introduction to narrative medicine was at a poetry therapy event in 2015. The presenter referred to the work of Dr. Charon. At that time, I was taking a break from medical practice to be home with my two young daughters, one of whom has a rare medical disease. Dr. Charon’s teachings resonated with me personally and professionally, and I subsequently attended a basic workshop. Currently, I use narrative skills with my patients in my work as a gerontologist and would like to develop a variety of programs to benefit populations living with chronic, debilitating and terminal disease.

Rita Patel
I have attended the Race Social Justice and Violence Basic Workshop in April 2017 and the Basic Workshop in November 2017. I work in applying what I learn in my work in the workplace to form positive relationships and culture and expand and shift narratives.

Cynthia Peabody
I attended the Basic Workshop years ago when I was still a Columbia University employee. Since then I have left the academy, completed my chaplaincy training and thrown myself into the world of palliative care chaplaincy. Poetry, prose, and music are central to my chaplaincy and my self-care. Mostly poetry. Always poetry.

Thaler Pekar
I’ve taken the Advanced Narrative Medicine workshop, and frequently work with physicians, medical students, and scientists on how to find, develop, and share stories.
Avani Prabhakar
I am a physician practicing palliative medicine as part of inpatient consultation service at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, Michigan. I got interested in this workshop as it was recommended at AAHPM’s (American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine) national assembly meeting last year where I attended a session on similar topic. My goal is to improve my writing skills as practicing physician.

Pamela Ressler
I am the founder of Stress Resources where tools of narrative medicine play a large part of my work with clients. Additionally, I am an adjunct clinical assistant professor at Tufts University School of Medicine where I teach courses in palliative care, ethical and sociocultural aspects of pain and mindfulness. I am thrilled to be returning to Columbia to dive deeper into use of narrative especially surrounding pain and suffering.

Hollis Roth
I am a second year Family Medicine resident. I was introduced to narrative medicine through an elective course in medical school and aim to incorporate narrative competence into my practice. I am currently pursuing further training in Palliative Care.

Helen Schultz
The last two years I have been teaching medical students and healthcare professionals in Denmark in Narrative Medicine.

Peter Sultan
Social work supervisor in the HIV service at Weill Cornell for the last 11+ years, and 5½ yrs prior as a psychotherapist in E. Harlem. Along the way I’ve been an art school drop out, writer/reader for public radio, & earned a stodgy degree in art history, as well as a certificate in psychodynamic psychotherapy, so narrative medicine fits like an old glove.

JD Tamucci
My first in-depth encounter with narrative medicine occurred at the "Race | Violence | Justice" workshop in April 2017. Driving home, after the last day, I distinctly remember feeling, "This is care. This is how I want to practice medicine."

Michael Vitez
I am director of a narrative medicine program at Temple's medical school, the Lewis Katz School of Medicine.

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Taryn C. Weinstein
I was first introduced to Narrative Medicine in 2015 when Rita Charon gave a keynote at the NEAAHP Meeting. I was excited to learn that I could combine my work in academic medicine with my love of creative writing and self-expression. I completed the Basic Narrative Medicine Workshop at CUMC in October 2015. I enjoyed the program immensely and so volunteered to join a pilot program for the online Narrative Medicine Certificate program. I’m looking forward to immersing myself in the Narrative Palliative Care Advanced Workshop.

Iwona Wieżel
Iwona Wieżel, Ph.D. (from Poland); Associate Professor of Classics and Narratology; recently also a nursing student) frequent participant of Narrative Medicine workshops at Columbia University in NY.

Wallis Wilde-Menozzi
I am a writer. I am drawn to the healing power of words, and in that life long exploration I was drawn, late in life, into narrative medicine and its goals. I have published two memoirs, Mother Tongue and The Other Side of the Tiber with Farrar, Straus and Giroux. I am at work on a third. I have published a novel with Cadmus Editions, SF. My essays have appeared in journals from Granta to Best Spiritual Essays and my poetry from Agni to Kenyon Review. I live in Parma, Italy and teach in Italy. In the US I have taught and lectured for Boston College, Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence, and Montclair State University.