The Nature Of Illness: PRMD 8005
Elective for Senior Medical Students and Pastoral Care Graduate Students

Faculty: Richard Martinez, MD, MH, and Julie Swaney, M. Div., Chaplain

Dates: January 4 – January 28, 2000

Location: All seminars will meet in the garden level conference room at 3570 E. 12th Ave. (corner of Monroe and 12th)

Course Description: All illness involves both objective and subjective elements. Traditional medical education often focuses on the objective elements of illness that we call disease. The illness, which is the experience of being sick, is often poorly appreciated. The voice and the experience of the patient is often inadvertently made silent at worse, and diminished at best, in modern medical practice. This course is a four-week elective bringing together senior medical students and pastoral graduate students to examine the nature of illness from the patient’s perspective. What is it like to have a chronic, life-threatening, or terminal illness? How do parents manage with a sick and/or dying child? How do the sick and suffering discover meaning in their experience? What are the spiritual, emotional, and personal changes expressed by those who are sick and suffering? How does a patient’s cultural, ethnic, and religious background influence the experience of illness? How do family relationships and personal belief impact illness? What obstacles internal to the caregiver are barriers to empathy and compassion? Arthur Frank, a writer who experienced and survived cancer, in The Wounded Storyteller, reminds his readers that “the ill person who turns illness into story transforms fate into experience; the disease that sets the body apart from others becomes, in the story, the common bond of suffering that joins bodies in their shared vulnerability.”

Methods: Each student will be assigned to 2 patients as his or her “mentors” throughout the elective. This involvement will include contact with the patient “mentors” several times per week, both in the medical setting as well as in the patient’s domestic sphere (e.g. home, nursing home). The patient “mentors” will be selected by criteria that bring a broad view of illness to the entire class. Thus, each student will have a primary “mentor” who has a medical illness that is of particular interest to the participant. The second patient “mentor” should present problems that are particularly challenging. For example, if the student is planning a residency in pediatrics and wishes to follow a child with cancer and that child’s family, then we ask that the student select a second patient mentor who will present very different challenges. We hope to create a diverse patient mentor group that will encourage a broad perspective on the illness experience. Each student will keep a journal of their contacts with their mentors for discussion in class. Each student will write several papers about their patient mentors from several points of view to be read and discussed in class.

Through humanities disciplines including literature, philosophy, and theology; film; essays from anthropology and cultural studies; memoirs and pathographies; interviews with hospital patients; group discussion; and additional writing exercises; participants will spend 4 weeks in intensive
study, reflection, and discussion about the experience of illness and suffering. Reverend Swaney and Dr. Martinez will meet with the entire class three times weekly for 2-3 hour seminars. These seminars will include discussion of assigned readings, films, and reflection on what is being learned from the deepening and growing relationship with the participant’s patient mentors.

**Required Texts:**

1) Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*
2) Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search For Meaning*
3) Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis*
4) Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*
5) Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*
6) Elie Wiesel, *Night*
7) David Morris, *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age*
8) Reynolds Price, *A Whole New Life*

**Elective Texts:**

1) Eric Cassel, *The Nature Of Suffering*
2) Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind*
3) David Morris, *The Culture of Pain*
4) Kathryn M. Munter, *Doctors’ Stories*
5) Sherwin Nuland, *How We Die*
6) Moward Brody, *Stories of Sickness*
7) Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories*
8) Anne Munsaker Mawkins, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography*
9) Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
10) Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings and A Leg To Stand On*
11) Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*
12) Carolyn Jaffee and Carol Ehrlich, *All Kinds Of Love*
13) Paul Tillich, *The Meaning of Health*
14) Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 4th edition.*
15) Barbara Sourkes, *Armfuls of Time*
16) Anatole Broyard, *Intoxicated By My Illness*
17) William Styron, *Darkness Visible*
18) Arthur Frank, *At The Will Of The Body*
19) Eric Cassel, *Doctoring*

**Objectives:** Each student will deepen their understanding and empathy for the patient’s experience of illness. The course will investigate “meanings” of illness and suffering as reflected in personal, cultural, and religious values. At the end of the course, each student will be able to:
1. To define and discuss concepts of illness, disease, suffering, and pain.

2. To understand and explain how the context of a person’s life including religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic elements influence the experience of illness.

3. To discuss and demonstrate how understanding, empathy, and compassion for a person’s illness is a practice that requires cognitive and emotive elements in caretakers.

4. To discuss and demonstrate the use of literature and humanities disciplines as a method of cultivating empathy, imaginative identification, and moral reflection.

5. To discuss professional identity, boundaries, and models of patient/professional relationships.

6. To demonstrate skills in writing in the voice of the patient with illness.

Requirements:
• Students are required to attend all seminars.
• Assigned readings and active participation in class discussion are required.
• Each student will keep a journal of his or her contacts with the patient mentor. This journal should document the reported experience of the patient, as well as reflections and reactions to these encounters.
• A final writing assignment on the experience with the student’s patient mentor. This can be a 4-6 page paper in the voice of the patient.

Course Faculty:
• Julie Swaney, M. Div., is the Chaplain at University Hospital and University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Reverend Swaney graduated from Duke University, and completed her Masters of Divinity at Yale University. She is the director of the pastoral care internship program at University Hospital. She is on the faculty of the Depts. of Medicine and Psychiatry, and is an active teacher in the Program in Health Care Ethics, Humanities and Law. Phone: 303-372-8291. Email: jswaney@purple.UHColorado.Edu

• Richard Martinez, MD, MM, is a psychiatrist on the faculty of the Department of Psychiatry and in the Program in Health Care Ethics, Humanities & Law at CU Medical School. In addition to his medical training, he completed a Master of Humanities program at University of Colorado, Denver, a fellowship in medical ethics at Harvard Medical School, and a Fellowship at Harvard University’s Center in Ethics and the Professions. He directs the curriculum in ethics and humanities at CU School of Medicine, and has taught courses in literature, ethics, and medicine for many years to both graduate and undergraduate students. Phone: 303-315-8596. Email: richard.martinez@uchsc.edu
Syllabus

Week 1: Health and Illness: Pain and Suffering

*Tues., Jan. 4 –12:00-2:30PM - Ethics Office*


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SOM - UCHSC - Program in Health Care Ethics, Humanities & Law
Thurs., Jan. 6 – 3-5PM - Ethics Office

**Topic**- Models of the Patient-Professional Relationship: A Bio-Cultural Approach


Fri., Jan. 7 - 9:30- 11:30AM - Ethics Office

**Topic**- Illness and Culture


**Week 2: Compassion, Empathy, and Illness**

_ Tues., Jan. 11 – 1-3:30PM- Ethics Office_

**Topic**- Listening to the Patient’s Story: Theory of Narrative.


_ Wed, Jan. 12 – 3-5:30PM—Ethics Office_

**Topic**- The Experience of Alienation.

Elective Readings- Essay by Howard Brody in *Stories of Sickness*, Chapter 7.

**Film**- 5:30-8:30PM at CPH auditorium “The Elephant Man”

*Thurs., Jan. 13 – 11-1:00PM- Ethics Office*

**Topic**- The Nature of Compassion and Barriers to Compassion


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**Week 3: Death and Dying: Experience at End of Life**

*Tues., Jan. 18 – 12-2:30PM - Ethics Office*

**Topic**- Families and Suffering


*Wed, Jan. 19 – 3-5:30PM – Ethics Office*

**Topic**- Physician Assisted Suicide: Mercy or Killing?


*Thurs., Jan. 20 – 11-1:00PM - Ethics Office*

**Topic**- The Opportunity at End of Life

Film- “On The Edge Of Being”

**Week 4: Adaptation, Coping, Despair, and Transcendence**

* Tues., Jan. 25 –12-2:30PM - Ethics Office

**Topic**: The Telling of Illness Stories, Psychological Suffering, and Themes of Adaptation


**Elective Reading**- Rita Charon, “To Render the Lives of Patients.”

**Exercise**- Paper due on writing in the patient’s voice.

* Wed., Jan. 26 – 3-5:30PM - Ethics Office

**Topic**: The Spiritual Aspect of Suffering

**Readings**- Victor Frankl’s *Man’s Search For Meaning*, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*.

* Thurs., Jan. 27 – 10-12PM- Ethics Office

**Topic**: Professionals and Boundaries

**Readings**- “An Appeal,” from *Ethics For The New Millenium*, The Dalai Lama. We will read student papers.