

# **Physician-Poet: Oxymoron or Necessity?**

## **How Creative Writing Can Make Physicians Better Doctors**

### **34th STF Annual Spring Conference**

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# Outline of Workshop

- Introductions
- Writing as a Metaphor for Doctoring
  - Similarities and differences between doctors and creative writers
- Theory and Concepts
  - Writing as healing
  - Writing and control
    - Gaining it and losing it
  - Writing as reflection
    - Steadiness and tenderness

# Outline of Workshop

- Writing Practice
  - Free form writing
  - Point of view writing
  - Mindful writing
- Uses of writing in teaching
  - Examples from UW and UCI
- Discussion

# Writing as Reflection

- Two Goals of Reflection
  - Steadiness
  - Tenderness

# Steadiness and Tenderness

- Steadiness
  - Close attention, curiosity
  - Presence (awake)
  - Mindfulness
- Tenderness
  - Compassionate hearing and seeing
  - Understanding point of view
  - Empathy

# Point of View Writing

- **Definition**
  - **Writing that adopts the patient's point of view**
- **Technique**
  - **10-12 min writing in 1st person voice (“I”)**
  - **Relates patient thoughts, feelings, perspectives on doctor-patient encounter, illness**
- **Purpose**
  - **To develop increased empathy**
  - **To decrease frustration**
  - **To develop new insights into patient management**

# Mindful Writing

- **Definition**
  - Writing that seeks to combine a centered attitude with an intention of compassion and loving-kindness
- **Technique**
  - Preparatory: relaxation, meditation, prayer
  - 10-12 min writing in 2nd person voice (you)
  - Format: letter, imagined speech
- **Purpose**
  - Cultivate feelings of loving-kindness toward patients
  - Achieve greater understanding, resolution, forgiveness

# Integrating Expressive/Creative Writing into Medical School Curriculum

- Point of view writing
  - 1st and 2nd year Patient-Doctor courses
- Creative writing/projects
  - 3rd year Medicine and Pediatric clerkships
- Mindful writing
  - FNP students
  - Family Practice residents