

***THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A
DIFFICULT PATIENT TO SHOW US
OURSELVES***

-William Carlos Williams

Key Points about Balint Groups

- 1. Balint examines the doctor-patient relationship to understand the patient as a person and the effect this has on the physician, the illness, and its management**
- 2. Each seminar begins with a spontaneous, unscripted case presentation from one of its members**
- 3. Psychological insight is used as a therapeutic tool**
- 4. Group members try to imagine what it is like for the presenter to treat this particular patient**

GOALS OF BALINT

1. Ability to think differently about patients through a process of accurate identification with and responsiveness to the patient

2. Ability to accept limits in patient care with humility rather than resentment and disillusionment

3. Ability to become aware of “blind-spots” in interactions with patients

CONTENT OF A BALINT GROUP

- **Conflicts interfering with patient care**
- **Feelings of MD**
- **Unrealistic patient demands**
- **Professional role delineation (boundaries and expectations)**
- **Special topics**
 - * **death and dying,**
 - * **family problems,**
 - * **psychosomatic issues,**
 - * **noncompliance,**
 - * **substance abuse,**
 - * **domestic violence,**
 - * **chronic illness,**
 - * **culturally different health beliefs,**
 - * **delivering bad news**

BALINT SKILLS

Recognition of feelings generated when with patients

Increased ability to pay close attention to patients, self

Increased ability to step back more easily from patient-exerted pressures and examine their meanings

Increased ability to be curious about and investigate patient behavior that was previously dismissed as irrational

Acceptance of and connection with patients

Increase in compassion, genuineness, trusting relationship with patients

Expanded repertoire of personal styles to use with patients

Improved management of previously intolerable or frustrating patients

USEFUL BALINT QUESTIONS

- 1. What's going on here?**
- 2. What's the doctor feeling?**
- 3. What's the patient feeling?**
- 4. How would you be feeling?**
- 5. What's causing these feelings?**
- 6. What's happening between doctor and patient?**
- 7. What's another way of looking at this situation?**
- 8. What might be done differently?**