

INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL HUMANITIES

INTRODUCTION: As medical students, you are placed in the path of illness, often before you know very much about it.

What we learn from literature that helps increase empathy:

- 1) Imagination – so we can see others' reality, understand their pain
 - 2) Perspectival vision – so we can see other people's point of view; who is talking?; how do they experience events?; how would things look different if another character were telling the story
 - 3) Sense of mystery – depth and complexity of experience; experience is not reductive; mystery vs. puzzle; sense of awe
 - 4) Capacity to be fully present, give full attention – phenomenon of bearing witness
 - 5) Develop sensitivity to language, tone, omissions and inclusions; helps to recognize ambiguities, interpret signs and cues, form conclusions from incomplete data, and understand hidden meanings
 - 6) Emotional engagement – the risk of moving closer to, rather than farther from, the patient
 - 7) Whole person understanding – ability to place patients within the context of their life-story and personal values
 - 8) Reflection on experience – ability to make sense of and draw lessons from events that have occurred
- Narrative competence – the ability to understand and be moved by the meanings of singular stories about individual human beings

II. WRITING STORIES:

A. Charon – the importance of doctors' narrative reflection on their practice

Writing about traumatic events has been demonstrated to have therapeutic effect

Coulehan – writing poetry makes physicians more sensitive and empathic

Conjunction between medicine and poetry – both poet and physician put themselves into skin of someone else

Empathy crucial to diagnosis and treatment – ability to understand cognitive and affective components of someone else-s experience

Both poetry and medicine emphasize concrete, humanity