

## DO YOU NEED A MEDICAL HUMANITIES CONSULTATION?

***What is medical humanities?*** Medical humanities is the use of humanities-based instructional materials (in my case, literature, creative/expressive writing, and to a lesser extent, the arts) to learn about the patient's experience of illness and the doctor-patient relationship.

***What is a humanities consultant?*** A humanities consultant is a person (in this case, me), who will meet with you (in person, by phone, or email) to refine a humanities-related clinical issue and provide you with the materials and resources to explore it further.

***What happens during a humanities consultation?*** During the consultation, we will accomplish the following: 1) Identify which aspect(s) of your patient's illness, life, or relationship with his or her physicians can be better understood through humanities-based readings or writing 2) Outline specific learning objectives regarding your patient that can be achieved through the use of humanities 3) Select a methodology (ie., reading, writing) that best addresses your objectives 4) Decide which types of readings (short story, role-play, poetry etc.) or writing (journaling, free-form, creative, point-of-view, mindful) will be most useful in meeting your objectives. Whenever possible, I will provide actual readings and, if relevant, writing instruction.

***For what types of issues is a humanities consultation appropriate?*** On a process level, you will likely benefit from a humanities consultation if: 1) You want a deeper understanding of how your patient experiences and copes with his or her disease or situation (cancer, AIDS, aging, disability, renal failure) 2) You want to obtain insights into family dynamics that occur around serious, life-threatening illness 3) You want to explore patient, family member, and physician feelings, either positive feelings of joy or revelation; or negative feelings of fear, helplessness, loss of control, anger, depression 4) You are interested in reflecting on the doctor-patient relationship and the role of the physician toward patients with chronic and/or life-threatening disease.

On a content level, literature can provide insights into such clinical challenges as 1) delivering/receiving bad news 2) dealing with a "difficult" or "noncompliant" patient 3) examining stigmatizing aspects of disease and disability 4) exploring limits of care and end-of-life issues.

***How long will the consultation take?*** A consultation could take anywhere from 10 minutes to one hour, at the learner's discretion.

***What do you need to do to prepare for a consultation?*** You should be prepared to tell your patient's story in as much depth as you know, emphasizing a "whole person" understanding. You should also have formulated one or two questions/issues on which you would like humanities input.

***How might a humanities consultation benefit me personally?*** The humanities consultation may enhance empathy for your patient; increase your compassionate

curiosity about and appreciation for your patient; give you new ways of thinking about your patient; and generally provide the time and motivation to reflect on your patient from a “whole person” perspective. Perhaps most importantly, by providing a small hiatus from your usual clinical and academic responsibilities, a humanities consultation can lift up your heart and renew your spirit.

***If you would like to arrange a consultation, please contact Dr. Johanna Shapiro at [jfshapir@uci.edu](mailto:jfshapir@uci.edu) or 949-824-3748.***