

Medical Encounter

Building Community, Providing Voice, Supporting Innovation

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cesses of Relating. This model nudges clinical relationships a step beyond previous discourse to consider not only the dyad of clinician and the person in their care, but rather all relationships and all the directional arrows between the various players. It takes the emphasis away from simply conveying and analyzing information for the patient's benefit and realigns toward the patterns and the meanings that are being created between any dyad. In terms of a clinician and patient, this means that the focus of attention is the very relationship itself, something a bit bigger than the familiar 'patient-centered' way of thinking. The initial conditions of interest are not only those of the patient but also those of the clinician. The changes of interest in the clinical encounter are the changes that happen to *both* the patient *and* the clinician, and the clinician's calling is to be attentive to self as much as to the one in front of her. Expand this focus to include relationships between janitors and nurses, physicians and social workers, teachers and students, and now you have a new paradigm for interdisciplinary work and education that changes the way we look at quality assurance and organizational change.

My co-authors and I found the process and organization of the conference itself to embody a valuable example of complexity principles in action. This marriage encourages the field of healthcare communication to go beyond communication and patient-centered results to the very essence of what it means to grow while we are at our work of helping others. This marriage also provides an exciting area for complexity scientists to apply and test the theory.

Epilogue

Conference organizers are now planning a second course on complexity and relationship-centered care in November 2007; watch for an announcement soon. If you'd like to volunteer for the planning committee, please contact Chris Pallozola at chris@AACHonline.org.

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2. Frank, A. *The Renewal of Generosity: Illness, Medicine and How to Live.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005.
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Suggested Books

Chaos by James Gleick
Edgewise by Brenda Zimmerman et al
Complexity in Group Processes: A Radically Social Understanding of Individuals by Ralph Stacey

Articles

The Healer's Art: Awakening the Heart of Medicine

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Abstract

In this article, the authors describe the development and structure of the "Healer's Art" course. The Healer's Art was originally developed by Rachel Naomi Rehman as an elective at UCSF in 1992, and is now offered at 53 medical schools around the world. The course offers a safe environment for students and faculty to explore and connect with the humanistic and professional values that they bring to the practice of medicine. The course has been well received and is seen as one of the major innovations in fostering professionalism in medical education.

Introduction

The Healer's Art is a medical school elective designed by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., Director of the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal (ISHI), and Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine at UCSF School of Medicine. It is a 15-hour course that has been taught annually at UCSF since 1992. The course's innovative educational strategy is based on a discovery model and draws on tested approaches and theories from such fields as humanistic psychology, formational theory, contemplative practice, imagery, and cognitive and Jungian psychology. In 1999, ISHI began to train faculty to disseminate the course and currently 53 medical schools offer the Healer's Art in the U.S., Canada, Israel and Slovenia (see Figure). In 2006, the course was completed by 1806 students nationally. The Healer's Art was featured in U.S. News & World Report's "America's Best Graduate Schools" issue for 2002 as an example of excellence in medical education. The original 15-hour course curriculum was designed for first- and second-year medical students. An advanced six-hour curriculum, offered as a day retreat or two sequential sessions, is now available for third- and fourth-year students and residents.

The Healer's Art enables students and faculty to form an ongoing community of inquiry into the core values and

shared meaning that underlies the practice of scientific medicine. The course is an effort to address the hidden curriculum and enable students and faculty to articulate and more closely affiliate with their intention to serve and the meaning of their work. The growth in cynicism, alienation, dissatisfaction and depression over the course of medical training is well documented. These unintended consequences of medical education may be lessened through the initiation of reflection and open dialogue in communities of explicitly shared values. Through the formation of such community, the Healer's Art course has the potential to immunize participating students and faculty against the toxicity of the hidden curriculum

Course Goals

The overall goals of the course are four-fold:

1. To provide support for medical students in recognizing, valuing, enhancing and preserving the human dimension of their work.
2. To enable students and physicians to experience and affiliate with the core values of the Hippocratic Oath: compassion, service, harmlessness, love and justice as a way of life.
3. To enable students and physicians to experience the support of an egalitarian and collegial relationship that is non-judgmental, non-competitive and "harmless."
4. To enable students and faculty to explore the concept of healing in medicine and participate in relationships that promote healing.

Course Topics and Educational Principles

The Healer's Art is focused on the inner life of physicians and students and includes five three-hour experiential and contemplative modules: Discovering and Nurturing Your Wholeness; Sharing Loss and Honoring Grief (2 sessions); Beyond Analysis: Allowing Awe in Medicine; and the Care of the Soul: Service as a Way of Life. These topics are core experiences of professionalism that physicians rarely discuss among themselves. In the course, loss, grief, awe, mystery, calling and commitment are shared openly and personally, building a powerful community of shared intent and experience between students and faculty. Students are woven into the lineage of medicine through the sharing of stories and the recognition of the underlying common intent to serve that underlies scientific competency and expertise.

The following principles and practices underlie the course.

1. The course is based on a "discovery model" in which

there are no experts, no right answers, and it is acceptable to "not know." The wisdom in the collective life experience of the group is clarified and harvested and a spirit of curiosity is encouraged. Faculty members participate in the contemplative exercises and share their personal insights along with the students. This model encourages respect for others, self-exploration and self-trust, and allows for personal ownership of the fundamental principles of healing.

2. The model is both didactic and experiential — about 10% of course time uses a didactic approach. Non-cognitive methodologies such as reflection on life experience or personal values comprise 90% of the course; students successfully participate in such holistic approaches as imagery, ritual, poetry writing and journal keeping. Each session begins with a "seed talk" given by a faculty member and presented in the large group. This is followed by a guided reflection, and the sharing of student and faculty reflections and insights in small groups. Small groups consist of 5 students and a faculty member and are held constant through each session of the course.

3. The small groups are a form of genuine community. In these groups, students come to know one another in depth, discover shared values, and support each member's struggle to be authentic and true to him/herself. The small group discussions are bounded by agreement to a set of ground rules that encourage students to listen, with simple respect, to the truth and reality of others; keep confidences; and withhold unsolicited advice. The environment of the Healer's Art encourages students to express their natural compassion in their own ways, which are then acknowledged and validated by their peers and faculty. After the course has concluded, groups may continue to meet on their own to discuss relevant issues.

4. In small group discussions, students are encouraged to embody basic parameters of the healing relationship to one another in simple and accessible ways, observe in others the effect of taking these approaches, and experience their personal response to being met in this way by fellow students. Such healing principles as *presence*, *harmlessness* and *acceptance* are encouraged by asking students to commit to "Generous Listening" during their discussions — listening to one another simply to know what is true for another person at a given time rather than to agree or disagree; compare skills, intelligence or capacities; like or dislike what is being said; or "fix" each other's beliefs. Students have described their experience of these small groups, contrasting them with other school experiences, in the following ways: "I feel safe in my Healer's Art group, something that I do not feel in other learning groups." "Because I could take my 'game face' off in my small group, I discovered that I am not here alone." "I could share who I am and not just what I know."

5. Interactional approaches learned between students in the Healer's Art course can transfer beyond the course. It has been observed that students discussing experiences of personal disappointment and loss with one another can trans-

fer the underlying interactional approaches to their relationships with patients. Students nationally have reported a greater confidence in bringing more of themselves to the doctor-patient interaction.

6. The curriculum is both well-established and responsive to the needs of each class of students. Student advisors drawn from the first- and second-year classes are central to course planning and implementation. They advise on the needs and concerns of their class, the climate of the class and the school, and making their classmates aware of the opportunity to enroll in the course. Depending on available funding, students may receive a gift of popular books relevant to medicine (e.g., *Tuesdays with Morrie*). They also receive a course Reader designed by ISHI and drawn from both the professional and the popular literature. It is made clear to the students that these materials are not required reading. Rather, students are encouraged to explore the Reader over time and to draw support from its extensive bibliographies as they continue their education and work in medicine and are challenged by issues in their training.

Curricular Examples

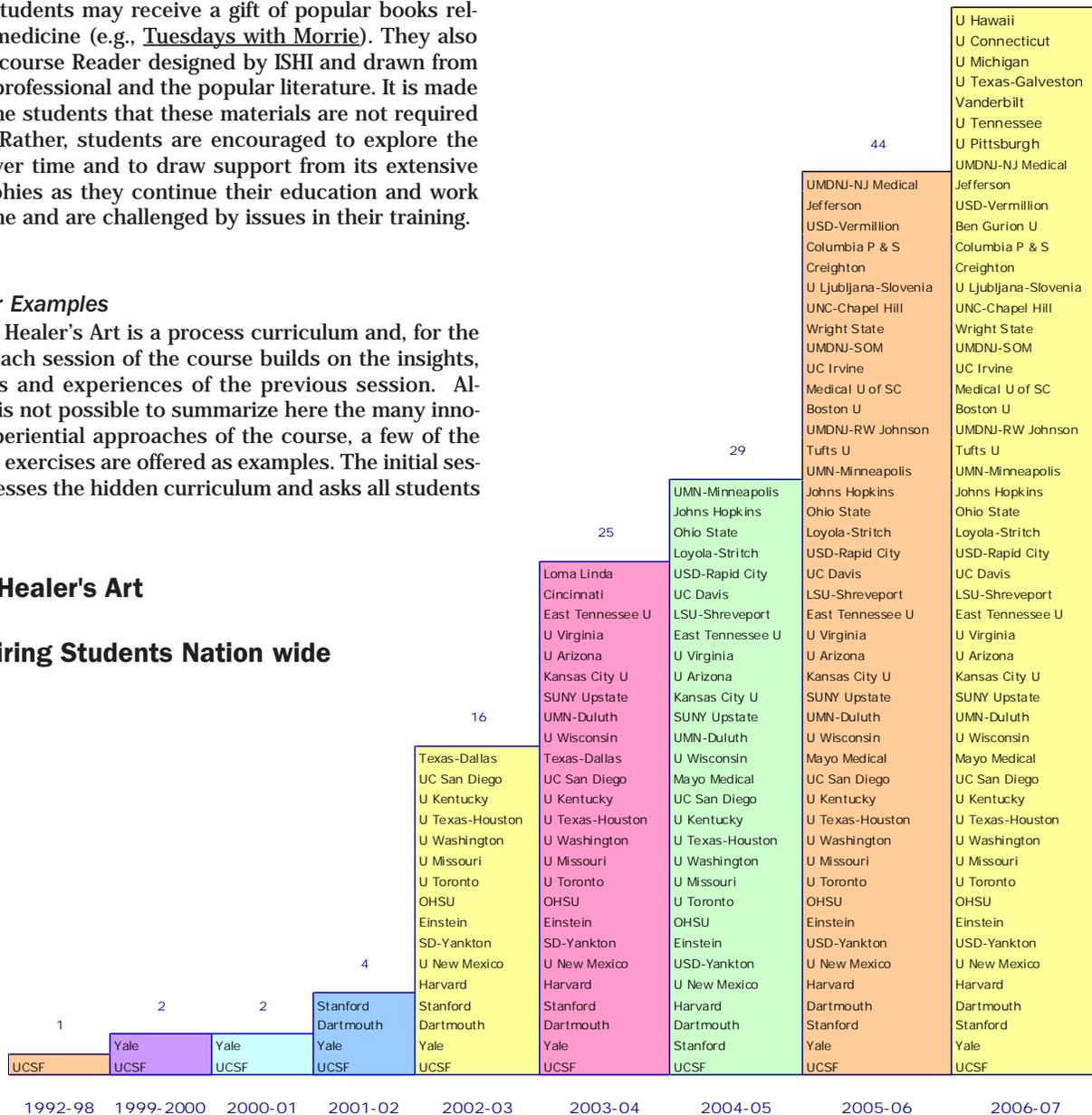
The Healer's Art is a process curriculum and, for the student, each session of the course builds on the insights, reflections and experiences of the previous session. Although it is not possible to summarize here the many innovative experiential approaches of the course, a few of the curricular exercises are offered as examples. The initial session addresses the hidden curriculum and asks all students

to draw a picture of a part of themselves they are concerned may change or that they feel is changing as they go through their training, or a part of themselves they are not completely comfortable revealing to others at their school. Students are asked to look at their completed picture as if it were a symbol for a human quality or strength and label the picture with the name of this quality. The pictures drawn with crayons on 12' x 18' newsprint are deeply moving. Every year across the country students tell us through these drawings that they are concerned about preserving such qualities as kindness, vulner-

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The Healer's Art

Inspiring Students Nation wide



Medical Schools offering The Healer's Art, by Academic Year

ability, honesty, generosity, holiness, humanness, tenderness, inner peace, "the heart," justice, wonder, and curiosity as they become physicians. They are usually surprised to discover that their small-group classmates share their concern and are enabled to offer and receive support as well as to devise ways to self-remember.

In the final session of the course, after a discussion about the nature of calling and a reflection upon their own calling, students are enabled to write a personal mission statement or "Hippocratic oath" which they read aloud to their peers and faculty. The oaths share some fundamental commonalities, and those written by students vs. physicians, one school vs. another, a foreign country vs. the U.S. are indistinguishable. Through such an exercise, the community of shared values and intention that underlies the practice of medicine becomes clear and each student and faculty member recognizes that they have a place in it and belong. Here are a few examples of first-year medical student mission statements from Healer's Art courses nationally:

May you find in me the Mother of the World.
May my hands be a mother's hands.
My heart be a mother's heart.
May my response to your suffering
be a mother's response to your suffering.
May I sit with you in the dark
as a mother sits in the dark.
May you know through our relationship
That there is something in this world that can be
trusted.

Lord, Grant me the power to heal.
Make me Your instrument.
Allow Yourself to flow through me
as I work in Your service.
As You made the first healer
and as You shall make the last,
Link me in Your chain.

Do not ask me what is wrong
For I may not know.
Do not ask me why this happened
For I may not know.
Do not ask me what to do
For I may not know
But ask me if I will try to understand how it is for you,
If I will think of you first.
If I will stay with you.
And I may be able, at last,
To lift my eyes to meet yours
and say

Yes,
Yes
Yes. I will.

Observations on the Impact of the Course

The Healer's Art has been extremely well received by students at schools of widely divergent regional and academic cultures and its remarkable national and international dissemination underscores its utility to students and faculty. Formal quantitative analysis of course evaluations has demonstrated that the course is highly rated and offers content and experiences that students report are not typically available elsewhere in their curriculum. Students have said that the course enables them actually to experience and practice what is only advocated elsewhere in their required curriculum. One student reported that "*Humanism is paid a lot of lip service. It's nice to actually discuss it in concrete, personal examples and experience its power and importance, rather than simply to be told to employ it by an instructor.*"

These findings are surprisingly uniform across the wide variety of schools offering the course. More than a decade of evaluations suggests that the course has as profound an effect on the faculty as on the students. Faculty describe the course as important, inspiring, healing and transformative to them personally and professionally. Faculty comments include the following: "Because of this course I see all students differently. I am a far better teacher, a far better doctor and a far better human being." "I had thought that first year students were naive about the meaning of medicine. I now see that they are very close to what it all means and I had become cynical without even knowing it." "I have taught these students for years without knowing who they really are and the depth of what they bring to this work." Ongoing course evaluation and research is investigating the long-term impact of the course on both student and faculty.

Offering the Course at Your Institution

The course has been offered successfully at medical schools of widely varied sizes, locations, and regional cultures. Despite wide differences in age and academic and personal backgrounds, course faculty tend to find fundamental similarities in their experience of the Healer's Art. Surprised by this uniformity of response and by his own success in initiating the elective at his school, one of course director and associate dean has described the course as "bullet proof."

ISHI's dissemination of the Healer's Art is supported by grants and generous donations. It is our hope to continue to offer a widening number of students and faculty the opportunity to participate in this learning experience. In preparation for teaching the course, course directors attend a five-day training retreat at Commonweal in Bolinas, California. Partial scholarship assistance is available if needed. Course direc-

tors then orient and train their own faculty locally. ISHI offers materials, guidebooks, and ongoing telephone support and encouragement as the course proceeds at each school.

The Healer's Art elective can be seen as a course in professionalism education. Professionalism includes both technical competencies as well as deeper issues of values, intention and character. The pressures of contemporary practice may require us to broaden our customary educational objectives and goals, to help students develop the capacity to commit to their core values and find lifelong meaning in the work of medicine in the same systematic way we now foster the skills to maintain a current knowledge base and technical expertise.

The Healer's Art course is supported by grants to the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal from private donors and the following foundations: the George Family Fund, the M.A.C.H. Foundation, the Barnard OSHER Foundation, and the Flow Fund.

Please contact ISHI at ishi@commonweal.org if you are interested in learning more about initiating the Healer's Art curriculum at your institution. The Healer's Art is grant supported and copyrighted and can be taught by permission only.