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Narrative Writing and Emerging Clinical Practice

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Narrative Writing and Emerging Clinical Practice

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Background

- Narrative writing in medical education
  - Self awareness *(Hays, 2005)*
  - Reducing practitioner stress *(Brady et.al. 2002)*
  - Improving communication *(Charon, 2001)*
  - Improving patient-centered care *(Yamada et.al. 2003)*
  - Developing empathy and trust between patient and practitioner *(DasGupta & Charon, 2004)*

- Narrative writing at UNM SOM

Project Description

Practical Immersion Experience

- Eight weeks
- Summer between first and second year
- Working in clinical setting with preceptor

Project Description (2)

Narrative Strand

- Self-selected students
- E-mail exchange of reflection with faculty mentors (response, no grading)
- Select one piece of writing to turn in
- Reading of work
- Evaluation

Goals of Narrative Strand

- Encourage students to reflect on clinical experience in their emerging practice

- Connect experience with learning

- Develop student/mentor relationship

- Encourage use of writing as a learning tool for the developing practitioner

Methods

- ## Recruitment
  - Student volunteers
  - Faculty

- ## Preparation of Guidelines
  - Written material
  - Orientation session

- ## End of project
  - Selection of sample to read & submit (student)
  - Evaluation by faculty and students
  - Review of writing (director)

Results

Student and mentor participation

- 2005 - 9 students, 9 mentors
- 2006 - 22 students, 20 mentors
- 2007 - 57 students, 57 mentors

Results (2)

Areas of student writing

- Initiation
- Identity
- Awe
- Frustration and disillusion
- Questioning
- Values
- Community

Results (3)

- **Comments from students**
  - Changed view of patient encounter
  - Mentors helped broaden student perspectives
  - Thinking differently about own lives

- **Comments from mentors**
  - Pleasures of mentoring
  - Reliving own younger days
  - Perspective on the students

Discussion

- ## Keys to success
  - Relationship between student and mentor
  - Privacy of correspondence
  - Choice of topics

- ## Limits
  - Self-selected students
  - No proof of effectiveness for future practitioners
  - Glitches for some students and mentors

Discussion (2)

Future work and scholarship:

- Connection between narrative writing and success in medical school
- Looking at developing reflective abilities
- Looking at mentor responses
- Inviting mentors to write