The Physician Healer Track:
Longitudinal Contemplative Training
at the University of Texas Medical Branch

Presented by
Cara Geary, MD, PhD
Era Buck, PhD
At
2015 Centile Conference
Washington DC
October 20, 2015
Educating Physicians: A Call for Reform of Medical School and Residency (Carnegie Foundation Report 2010)

Is There Hardening of the Heart During Medical School?

Empathy among medical students: is there a relation with quality of life and burnout?

Protecting students and promoting resilience

Compassion cultivation: a missing piece in medical education

Embodied health: the effects of a mind-body course for medical students

Professional identity (trans)formation in medical education: reflection, relationship, resilience

Maintaining empathy in medical education.

A call for reflection: medical student driven effort to foster empathy and compassion
Program Mission

Students will develop habits of thought, feeling and action that will enable their development as compassionate, communicative and socially responsible physicians.

Cooke, Irby, O’Brien 2010
Thus cultivating a *healing presence* to the benefit of themselves and their patients
Bleeding Heart or Heart of Stone?

Do I get bonus points if I act like I care?
Six months of training within their 4 years of medical school

- Broad Content
- Broad Experience
- Faculty from Diverse Specialties
- Non-judgmental
Longitudinal Mentoring

• Monthly Dinner Meetings
• Supporting Individual Growth
• Same Mentors Across Years
Content Based on Expertise

• Core Faculty selection
  • Mindfulness
  • Communication
  • Life Balance
  • Education
• Intentional Development
  • Being with self
  • Being with another
  • Being with suffering
PROGRAM DESIGN

Integrated into Institutional Culture

- Multi-departmental Representation
- Track Status
- Integration Goals
Year 1  
Dinner meetings

Summer  
2 month preceptorship

Year 2  
Dinner meetings

Year 3  
Dinner meetings

Year 4  
Dinner mtgs  
1 elective  
Scholar Month
Theme of 1\textsuperscript{st} year: Self-Awareness

Assignment

Reflective Essay

Dinner Discussion
**Topics**

- Stress Awareness & Reduction
- Self-Compassion
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Daily Practice
- Internal Family Systems: Parts Work
- Humor
- Non-Violent Communication
- Mindfulness Introduction
- Shame Awareness and Resilience
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- 2 months of daily reflections
- 2 reflective essays and
- 2 dinner meetings
Internal Family Systems
Integrated into Mindfulness Course
Weekend MBSR/Parts Work Retreat
Read 1<sup>st</sup> half for April session
Read and Practice 2nd half of book during preceptorship
Preceptorship
• May and June between MS1 and MS2
• 15 half-days of clinical shadowing
• Four longitudinal courses
• Weekend retreat (MBSR & Parts Work)
Four Longitudinal 8-week Courses

- Motivational Interviewing
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
- Wellness and Life Balance
- Being with Suffering

Year 1
Dinner meetings

Summer
2 month preceptorship

Year 2
Dinner meetings

Year 3
Dinner meetings

Year 4
Dinner mtgs
1 elective
Scholar Month
**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

**Being with Suffering Longitudinal Course**
- Hospice – perinatal and adult (4 half days)
- Interprofessional perspective – nursing and chaplaincy
- Anticipatory Grief
- Energy Medicine
- Challenging patient encounters
- Compassion
- Shame Resilience
- Journaling
- Reflective Essay on entire Preceptorship
Shame Resilience

- Reading & Reflection
- Profound essays on shame, perfectionism, and self acceptance
Year 2

- Deepens practice and engagement
- Shifts focus to relationships; being with another
### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

**Year 1**
- Dinner meetings

**Year 2**
- Dinner meetings

**Summer**
- 2 month preceptorship

**Year 3**
- Dinner meetings

**Year 4**
- Dinner mtgs
- 1 elective
- Scholar Month

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**Topics**

- Personality Awareness
- Naikan
- Delivering Bad News
- Seeing Bias
- Healing Presence
- Mystery and Awe
- Compassion
- Religion and Spirituality
- Empathy
- Two months of practice
- Japanese approach to a practice of Self-Reflection and Gratitude
- Essays remarkable for shifts in perspective
Delivering Bad News

- Experiential exercise
- Well-trained Standardized Patients
  - New cancer diagnosis
  - Loss of driving ability in elderly
  - New & terminal cancer diagnosis
• Short yet profound book immediately following bad news session

• Captures the mission of the Physician Healer Track
Integrated with Existing Practice of Medicine Course

- Same curricula as remainder of MS3 class
- Same small groups as first two years
- Additional essay each month
  - Revisiting topics of first two years
- Support for year of required clerkships
Integrated with Existing Practice of Medicine Course
  • Same groups as first 3 years; additional essay each month

One Physician Healer Track Elective
  • Integrative Medicine
  • Global Health
  • Palliative Care Medicine
  • Advanced PHT

Scholarly Capstone Project for Track
RECOGNITION OF PARTICIPATION

• Physician Healer Track participation recognized in Dean’s Letter

• Students recognized at graduation as Physician Healer Scholars
PROGRAM EVALUATION

- Student Response
- Faculty Response
- Institutional Response
Program Evaluation

Student Response

- 3 cohorts enrolled
  - Cohort 1: 26 students (2/3 women)
  - Cohort 2: 37 students (2/3 men)
  - Cohort 3: 42 students (gender neutral)
    - Heart of Medicine: 7 students
# Student Response

N=63 Reported as %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent are the questions below true for you about the PHT Preceptorship</th>
<th>very small extent</th>
<th>small extent</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>large extent</th>
<th>very large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positively impacted my personal development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved my ability to empathize and connect with others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positively impacted my professional development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed my satisfaction with my decision to become a physician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught me skills I have used to take better care of myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me cope with stress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my knowledge of techniques for personal development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my ability to work collaboratively</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my self-confidence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAM EVALUATION

Student Response

Large or very large Extent

Cope  Self Care  Empathize  Knowledge  Confidence  Collaborate  Decision  Personal  Professional

A Yr2  AYr1  Aprecept  Byr1  Bprecept
Student Response

- Ongoing Data Collection
  - Maslach Burnout Inventory
  - Coping Styles
  - Empathy – Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)
Student Response Qualitative

Comments from students at the end of their second year:

“Advice from our facilitators has proven invaluable. Just taking time out to think outside of curriculum has a healing effect”

“These assignments have encouraged me to spend time on introspection in my life. Since our preceptorship last summer, I have also continued writing in my journal and meditating.”
Before STEP, I had been keeping a self-reflection Journal that included questions on gratitude, which I found very helpful to keep things in perspective and keep up a positive mood. Delivering Bad News was so very helpful for our professional development, as we have not yet received much other direction in delivering bad news.”
“Having the same faculty throughout the track has helped build a level of trust so that I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts and opinions, knowing I will be heard and respected.”
Faculty Response

• 7 Core faculty for Physician Healer Track
• Currently 30 small group facilitators
• Diverse Specialties represented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anesthesia</th>
<th>ENT</th>
<th>Neurosurgery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Surgery</td>
<td>OB / MFM</td>
<td>Family Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynecology</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Education Affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Faculty Response

- Faculty Development
- Monthly faculty meetings
- Scholars in Healing
Institutional Response

- Intention to expand and integrate content
  - UME
  - GME
- Faculty Development Group – Scholars in Healing
- Heart of Medicine Program
- Student Healer Association
  - Interprofessional Student Interest Group
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in

Leonard Cohen, Anthem
• Questions?

• A Google search for Physician Healer Track will turn up our website at the top of the list