GREETINGS FROM MEDICAL HUMANITIES

What an incredible start to 2018 we have experienced in the Medical Humanities Program. As the final weeks of the spring semester—and the school year—winds down, we are enormously proud of all our students and what they have accomplished. In just a few short weeks some of our students will head off to med school, begin summer internships, shadow health care professionals in their communities, or use their summer for classes to continue pursuing their degree.

This past semester included a fury of activity. We hosted many special guest speakers including most recently, Colonel W.M. “Sparky” Matthews of the United States Air Force. Colonel Matthews is a surgeon currently on active duty at Craig Joint Theater Hospital, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Dr. Eric Cassell, a long-time friend of our program and a retired internal medicine physician, came for a week in February where he spoke to our students, engaged in conversation with administration, and worked alongside Dr. Barron to create a method to preserve historical lectures that are currently on 1960s-era reel-to-reel tape.

Another successful Medical Humanities Retreat held in January for over 100 students is now in the books. Dr. Brian Volck was this year’s guest speaker who brought insight into his work as a pediatrician among the Navajo nation. We also awarded six DeBakey Medical Foundation scholarships to students studying Medical Humanities.

As we wrap up the semester, we say farewell to more than 50 graduates and prepare for at least that many new freshmen in the fall. Our program is being recognized as a topic of interest in medical school interviews which in turn, has filtered out to students interested in the medical field.

Thank you to all of you who care about our students and demonstrate that concern through your support of the Medical Humanities Program. With medicine in mind and healthcare at heart!

Be sure to check out the new Medical Humanities Magazine!
2018 Medical Humanities Retreat
Meghan Basso, MH Senior

The 19th annual Medical Humanities Retreat was held on January 26 and 27 at Baylor’s Truett Seminary. This year, the Medical Humanities program hosted Dr. Brian Volck, a pediatrician, writer, teacher, and advocate for families in poverty, and centered on the theme “Christian Hospitality in Hospitals and Other Unlikely Places,” inspired Jesus’s parable in Matthew 25:31-46. Dr. Volck reflected on his experience of working with children and families on Native American reservations.

Friday night was filled with excellent food, conversation, discussion, and fellowship lead by Dr. Lauren Barron and Dr. Volck. Dr. Volck introduced the attendees to his background and reflected on some of his experiences working with children and families on Native American reservations. Dr. Barron then provided her own anecdotes of treating “the least of these” throughout her clinical career, reflecting on the necessity of hospitality, empathy, and humility when in these situations. Both doctors pointed out that no matter how much one gives while treating a patient, one will always gain more by the nature of hospitality.

On Saturday morning, Dr. Elise Edwards, a Baylor professor, spoke on the effects of architecture and environment on healing. As she noted, “healing involves a balance of mind, body, and spirit,” so it is important to understand the physical and emotional characteristics and associations with hospitals and healthcare settings for patients. For many patients, hospitals are associated with isolation, unknowns, and confusion; while the association with sickness is significant, the emotional memories tend to carry more weight and need to be addressed by healthcare professionals. As Dr. Edwards notes, healthcare professionals should provide empowerment, comfort, engagement, and discernment for patients while abstaining from technology usage, rushing, and assuming to create an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and conducive to healing.

Following Dr. Edwards’s discussion, Dr. Volck led the retreat in a discussion about hospitality, using art as support. Using the painting “The Fall of Icarus,” Dr. Volck was able to show suffering, pointing out that often people are suffering right in front of us and no one notices or does anything to help. To combat this overlook, Dr. Volck recommends leaning on hospitality, which would allow healthcare professionals to adequately meet and exceed the needs of those they are treating. Hospitality, as taught in Matthew 25:31-46, requires us to give as much as possible and allows us to receive reciprocally. However, despite our efforts and desires, we cannot always cure someone of their ailments; often, presence and comfort are the best and most important things that can be given. “In an emergency, what do you administer through the ear?” Dr. Volck asked in this conversation. “Words of comfort,” he answered. Perhaps the most hospitable thing we can do for our patients and colleagues is to provide them with love, support, and dignity.
Saturday also included small group discussions, a Q&A session with a panel of former Medical Humanities students now in various professional schools, and wonderful fellowship and worship.

The Medical Humanities Retreat is an incredible way to engage in the community that the Medical Humanities program has established over the past 19 years. While engaging in professional discussion, attendees are also able to engage in worship, community-building, and spiritual education, realizing the medical vocation as a spiritual calling and pursuing the Lord’s message and love through practice.
A Biologist, a Neuroscientist, and a Theologian walk into Cashion… While it may seem like the start of an interesting joke, this in fact was the setting for the 4th annual STEM and Humanities Symposium, centralized on this year’s topic of “The Body.” The faculty members Dr. Dwayne Simmons of the Biology department, Dr. Sara Dolan of Psychology and Neuroscience, and Dr. Natalie Carnes in the Department of Religion are all brilliant scholars, but would their respective disciplines be capable of integrating to form an accurate and well-rounded image of the body? To give the short answer, a resounding yes!

Dr. Simmons began the symposium by giving a biologist’s perspective on the human body, describing the diverse yet integrative nature of the body from cell to organ system. Next to present was Dr. Dolan who presented on Cartesian dualism, and the role that a Neuroscientist plays in exploring the blurred territory between mind and brain. Finally, Dr. Carnes described the Divine body found within the grotesque, and the example set by Christ of going out in mercy towards need and suffering. To conclude the symposium, Dr. Paul Farmer gave the plenary lecture on his work in West Africa during the Ebola crisis, describing the intricacies of claims of causality and notions of risk. While Dr. Farmer’s talk was inspiring and illuminating to the aspiring physicians and humanitarians in attendance, the faculty panel was the pinnacle of the entire event, embodying the collaborative and interdisciplinary conversations that Medical Humanities strives to create. The human body is not merely neurons or muscle cells or red blood cells acting independently and without communication. Each organ system works cooperatively, constantly communicating and sharing information necessary for the flourishing of the body. Why then, should the conversations between academic disciplines be any different? If we want the Body of the University to grow, more interdisciplinary conversations such as these are essential to the process of effectively developing future generations of well-rounded and critically thinking scholars.

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**Join the New Baylor Alumni Physician Network!**

If you are a Baylor graduate and now in medical school or residency training, or a physician who is already long established in medical practice, please consider joining the new Baylor University Physician Network!

You can connect with us on Facebook, or contact Jon Sisk at the Baylor Alumni Network, where he can help you connect with your fellow Bears. We have already had an event in Houston, with plans for events in Dallas & San Antonio coming soon.
2018 DeBakey Scholars Announced

Omar Sahibzada, MH Senior

By investing more than $1 million in the Medical Humanities Program at Baylor, the DeBakey Medical Foundation has made it possible for a highly motivated and academically talented group of students to be named as DeBakey Scholars each year. The recipients are chosen based on academic excellence and service in the health care field, some of the main aspects of Baylor’s Medical Humanities Program. Students who are granted this scholarship carry the legacy of a family that changed the medical field.

DeBakey Scholars have unique opportunities for small group interaction with faculty, local health care professionals, and campus speakers. In addition, students are awarded a $10,000 scholarship for the academic year. In receiving the scholarship, students are to act as custodians of the DeBakey legacy: as continuing agents of the foundation’s vision for the place of the humanities in medicine who uphold a standard of personal excellence. “Being a DeBakey Scholar inspires me to work harder towards my goal of becoming a Child Life Specialist and reminds me of the privilege it is to be able to work with hospitalized children and their families,” shared senior recipient Beth Bender.

Medical Humanities Program Announces Curriculum Revision

Omar Sahibzada, MH Senior

The Medical Humanities Department recently unveiled a revised curriculum that will take effect for the Fall 2018 semester. The new curriculum features the designation of three courses as core courses that all medical humanities majors must take. These courses include: Introduction to Medical Humanities, Introduction to Medical Ethics, and Christian Spirituality and Health Care. Additionally, medical humanities has been grouped into 6 categories: Philosophy, Religion & Spirituality, Literature & the Arts, Historical Perspectives, Behavioral Health, and Social Sciences and Health. Students will be required to take a minimum of one course per category, but may take additional courses within a category as electives.

The revised curriculum is seen as a positive step in making the medical humanities educational experience more progressive, innovative, and better suited for the increasing amount of students choosing the medical humanities as their undergraduate area of study. “Our goal was to foster a robust and broad experience in the field, encompassing a traditional humanities and social science education. We’ve removed redundancies within the coursework, and created basic requirements for all majors in order to make sure our curriculum is more standardized,” shared Dr. Bill Hoy.

Furthermore, the Medical Humanities minor has been reintroduced as a curricular option for students who wish to supplement their alternative path of study with a medical humanities education.
Dr. Eric Cassell Speaks at Baylor
Michael Davis, MH Senior

What an amazing and humbling treat, that Dr. Eric Cassell was able to make it down to Baylor University to talk to us about his experience in medicine. When Dr. Cassell was practicing medicine, he was one of the first of his time to carefully and thoroughly consider the role of the patient in the clinic. During a time where the humanities had yet to be a prominent part of medicine, Dr. Cassell recorded incredible interactions with patients that, although were not noticed for a while after, have soon become foundational for the medical humanities department as we know it. Clearly, we’re big fans of his work.

Here, we would like to recap some of the “big picture” conversations that Dr. Cassell spoke on during his visit, for anyone who is interested in his talk but was unable to make it.

What are some of the foundations of the humanities in medicine? Before the 1950s, to know about medicine was to know about diseases. After then, however, practicing medicine became so much more than simply being well-educated – the patient started to become a person. This approach to “patient centered medicine” took 50 years to gather steam.

Who the person a physician is treating is depends much on the disease he or she has, but also as much on how the patient thinks of and responds to the disease and its treatment. The great physician will search for these by asking key questions: “What has the disease done to your life? What has it done to your family? Your spirit?” Dr. Cassell firmly believes that the most serious mistake in practicing medicine is to forget to ask these questions.

How can you understand the whole by just understanding parts? Dr. Cassell’s response: You can’t. The whole of the patient sitting in front of the physician behaves as something so much more complex than the sum of his diagnoses put together. If a patient comes into a clinic with a hurt foot, it affects so much more of their perception and experience than simply “a pained foot.” It affects the way he or she walks, how he or she can socialize, if he or she can drive a car to get to work, how dependent he or she must be on others.

Unfortunately, Dr. Cassell could not identify a single medical school in either the United States or in Canada that teaches its students what a person truly is. Therefore, the humanities are so crucial: professionals spend their entire lives dedicated to learning about the whole of the person, and this experience is crucial in a field so heavily person-centered (such as, you guessed it, medicine). A HUGE thank you goes out to Dr. Cassell for traveling all the way to Texas to spend his time talking to our students about the importance of the humanities in medicine. What a role model, what a physician!
Col. Sparky Matthews

Colonel Walter “Sparky” Matthews, MD is a Baylor alumni who has many achievements to his credit. You may remember from our last newsletter that Colonel Matthews came to speak about George Washington’s Smallpox Inoculation and how this event helped win the Revolutionary War. He visited us again this semester, on leave from his command in Afghanistan, to speak on “Military Medicine and its Role in US Strategy in Afghanistan”. Dr. Matthews talk was fascinating and inspiring, particularly given the incredibly low mortality rate among seriously injured soldiers thanks to the outstanding care they receive at the point of injury and during transport to facilities designed for successively higher levels of care. At a reception for Colonel Matthews in the Medical Humanities office, he presented Dr. David Pennington, beloved professor of Chemistry here in the Baylor Science Building, with a flag flown over the American base in Afghanistan on the day of Dr. Pennington’s retirement.

For more about Colonel Matthews, see the story recently featured on the Baylor homepage at [http://blogs.baylor.edu/artsandsciences/2017/10/05/sparky-matthews/](http://blogs.baylor.edu/artsandsciences/2017/10/05/sparky-matthews/)

2018 Honors Theses

**Elizabeth Bender**  
Using Literature with Children and Families Impacted by Illness: A Resource Guide to Children’s Literature

**Paul Gaschen**  
Cartesian Dualism and the Problem of Interaction

**Emily McCalley**  
Catholicism, Contraception, and the Bottom Billion: A Grounded Theory Study of Family Planning and Global Poverty
2018 Graduates

Raul Aguilar   Sarah McWilliam
Meghan Basso   Lauren O'Connell
Ginnie Berg   Luke Rawls
Jena Brannon   Blake Rawls
Danae Chamberlain   Garrett Sacco
Caroline Coggin   Omar Sahibzada
Steven Dabbs   Emily Shaver
Michael Davis   Jordan Soupiset
Hannah Ditter   Addison Tenorio
Michaela Eason   Aanchal Thadani
Emma Flowers   Marcela Trevino
Caroline Grace   Daniel Truesdale
Madeline Harris   Bassey Ubokudom
Alexandria Holden   Shelby Velasquez
Nathan Holdman   Jennifer Welch
Cade Kinard   Alison Whiteman
Vivian Kwok   Meaghan Whyte
Ashley Lee   Lauren Woods
Tatiana Lopez   Tyler Wright
Kassy Martinez   Jacqueline Zhou
Taylor McCullough   Robert Zuniga