

Healing Arts: Narrative Medicine and Pain Care

Invited Lectures

Faculty:

Julia Schneider

There is no objective measurement for pain. No thermometer, blood test, or visual or a manual assessment will tell you how much someone hurts. Pain is a lived experience revealed only through the stories of those living it. Neuroscience shows that stories highly influence pain, too: personal experiences, beliefs, and expectations (the stories we tell ourselves) are just as relevant to recovery as diagnosis and prognosis (the stories our doctors tell us). And yet, most clinical education fails to prepare healthcare professionals to interact with stories meaningfully.

Narrative Medicine, a new field of study emerging from Columbia Medical School, addresses the need for narrative competence with a practice. Through close reading, the signature method of Narrative Medicine, healthcare professionals learn how to listen attentively and generously to patient stories. Reflective writing exercises also help practitioners examine their own narratives in supportive group settings. By bridging healthcare and the humanities, Narrative Medicine hopes to reform healthcare systems that often miss the story behind the symptom and the human behind the patient.

About Our Speaker:

Julia Schneider

Julia Schneider holds a Master's in Literature from the University of Texas at Austin and is a graduate of Columbia University's professional certification in Narrative Medicine. She owns RISE Wellness Center in Austin TX, where she works with a team of psychotherapists and massage/yoga therapists specialising in treating persisting pain. She is also the founder and director of NarrativeRx, an international learning community for healthcare providers, patients, teachers, and activists interested in deepening their listening skills through literature, philosophy, and the arts. She hosts group workshops, teaches online courses, and provides one-on-one training in Narrative Medicine at NarrativeRx.com.