

1-2020

Narrative Medicine: A Reflective Writing Workshop Series for Interprofessional Healthcare Students at Thomas Jefferson University

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Recommended Citation

Slater, MA, MS, Carly S.; Salzman, MD, Brooke; and Frasso, PhD, CPH, Rosemary, "Narrative Medicine: A Reflective Writing Workshop Series for Interprofessional Healthcare Students at Thomas Jefferson University" (2020). *Phase 1*. Paper 2.
https://jdc.jefferson.edu/si_hum_2022_phase1/2

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SKMC Class of 2022

Word count: 300

Narrative Medicine: A Reflective Writing Workshop Series for Interprofessional Healthcare

Students at Thomas Jefferson University

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Introduction:

Narrative medicine (NM) teaches reflective writing and close reading to help healthcare professionals think critically about themselves and others in order to offer more effective, empathic care. Few reports of NM methods document its value to facilitating collaboration and communication across students of different professional backgrounds. This study examines the effects of NM workshops on Thomas Jefferson University interprofessional healthcare students, and their utility to achieving these aims: 1) supporting thoughtfulness, mindfulness, and curiosity; 2) supporting the development and use of narrative in understanding the lives/contexts for self and others; 3) improving interactions and communication with others in professional and clinical contexts; 4) supporting humanism and whole person care (including self-care).

Methods:

Six bi-weekly, one-hour long NM reflective writing workshops were offered as a voluntary elective for interprofessional healthcare students. Participants completed a post-series

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questionnaire. Closed-ended responses were summarized, open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Results:

Twelve participants completed the questionnaire (8 medical students of different years, 1 MD/PhD student, 2 nursing students, 1 occupational therapy student). All participants reported that main aims 1) and 2) were achieved. 92% of participants reported that main aims 3) and 4) were achieved. 83% found the narrative exercises valuable to facilitating relationships with others of different professional backgrounds in the workshops, and to facilitating or advancing relationships with peers/colleagues outside of the workshops. 83% found the exercises helpful to reducing divides between interprofessional students. Qualitative analysis facilitated the organization of codes into 4 thematic categories: change, understanding, reflection, difference.

Discussion:

A NM intervention providing consistent exposure to NM methods was successfully implemented. This was a feasible, effective method for promoting reflection, understanding of self/others, whole person care/self-care, and communication and collaboration amongst interprofessional healthcare students. Workshop objectives were achieved, and participants reported personal and professional value and utility in participation.