

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this presentation is to introduce and bring to light the importance of Narrative Medicine in health care and display the effectiveness of Narrative Medicine in the practice of Dentistry. Narrative Medicine is an interdisciplinary field that places an emphasis on narration, close listening, and witnessing the "other". The benefits of Narrative Medicine in the field of dentistry are limitless, in that this approach can help practitioners offer more support, develop a better relationship, and ultimately result in fostering trust and satisfaction for their patients.

The process of health including oral health, has restrictions due to family and work, social culture, welfare of care givers, social policies and community order. The individual's choices and biological actions in sickness and health are intertwined with those restrictions and will set the stage for narration of the person who is coming to seek healing.



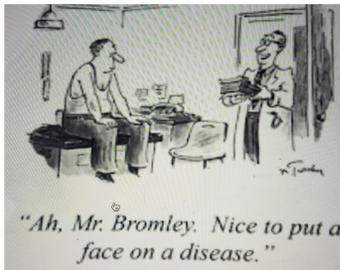
## RESEARCH DATA

Dr. Charon defines narrative medicine as "**medicine practiced with these skills of recognizing, absorbing, interpreting, and being moved by the stories of illness**". This is a "new frame" for dentistry and medicine, believing that it can improve many of the defects of our current dental/medical treatment. As caregivers understand better concepts of attention, representation, and affiliation, they become more ethical, more community minded, and better healers to their patients. Patient interviews will be different: instead of following a grid of questions, healers will converse with patients in an open-ended way. What is most important will emerge and emerge in ways that are most beneficial to the patient. Yes, this method will take more time but it will be more efficient in the long run. Bioethics, Charon argues, has been limited by legal approaches and philosophical principles. For her, narrative bioethics offers more human values in how people feel, experience reality, and relate to each other. There are also implications for social justice: why are the poor underserved?

One of the most exciting notion and radical idea that come from Narrative Science and Dr. Charon's book is that the practitioners, a health care professional or not, must be prepared to offer the self as a therapeutic instrument. This notion is closely related to the concepts of energy medicine, therapeutic touch (Tiffany Field), and intentionality (Wayne W. Dyer). The research and writings are from many areas including bioethics, cultural awareness and social criticism, theories in literature, pathographies (the study of the life of an individual or the history of a community with regard to the influence of a particular disease or psychological disorder) and story writing.

## METHODS & MATERIAL

Through a literature review of Social Science and Medicine, the Journal of Mental Health and the Journal of Medical Education, among other resources, we are bringing to light the importance of Narrative Medicine in oral health care and displaying the effectiveness of this discipline in the field of dental education and clinical care. The data has shown the importance of care and empathy which are especially crucial and necessary in dentistry. There is a body of evidence that medical and dental education are shifting from routine approaches to inequalities and stigma towards an awareness of attention to the structures of social, cultural and historical contexts. The health care disparities and activism place the educational systems into a practice of competency based on true learning of the web of inter-personal networks, political/social forces and environmental factors. Narrative medicine offers a fresh way to care, respect and provide Nourishing care



## PRINCIPLES



One of the core principles of narrative dentistry and medicine is that **receiving patients' stories helps to build empathy in the professional** and, in turn, improves the quality of care. Indeed, a number of recent studies have shown that higher levels of empathy may be associated with more positive outcomes in patients, especially in dealing with pain and suffering. As the effective practice of healing and treating, it requires the ability to acknowledge, absorb, interpret, and act on the stories of others. Narrative medicine and dentistry are proposed as a model for humane and effective health practice. By using methods such as close reading and reflective writing, it allows for examination of 4 central narrative situations: doctor and patient, doctor and self, doctor and colleagues, and doctor and society. With narrative competence, practitioners can reach and join their patients in illness, recognize their own personal journeys through, acknowledge close ties and responsibilities toward other health care professionals.

## DISCUSSION

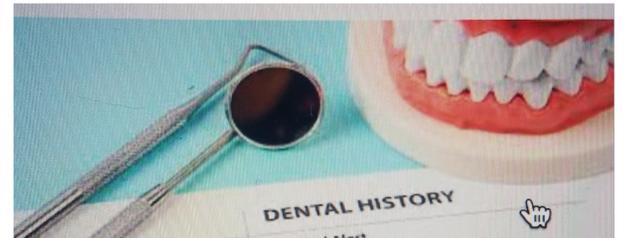
Dentistry is unique in that practitioners essentially take on a role as a therapist; the dental chair becoming a safe space where patients can share important factors of their lives. Narrative Medicine uncovers the importance of dialogue within the clinical encounter, where the dentist should take on a decentered role, in order to challenge the traditional norms of power and privilege and create a space for co-creation. Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman have outlined three forms of empathy which include: cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and compassionate empathy. In the field of dentistry and healthcare, compassionate empathy is the most beneficial to all as it "is not only feeling another person's feelings and appreciating his or her situation it is also feeling compelled to help". (Roucka, 8). The notions of empathy coincide with Narrative Medicine, which understands the important role of empathy and narrative in healthcare. This approach allows Doctors to honor their patient's stories, offer deeper healing, foster connection, and establish deeper trust between the doctor and patient. It emphasizes that people are more than their diagnosis and the power of storytelling. Through Narrative humility, which is the understanding that we can never comprehend the totality of another's story, one can engage, listen, and honor another's story.



## RESULTS



Sick people need healers who can understand their culture, their disease, treat their ailments and problems, and accompany them through their journey of healing. Despite our recent phenomenal and technological progresses in diagnosing and treating illnesses, doctors sometimes lack the capacities or fail to recognize the suffering of their patients and are not ready to join in their pain. As in acts of reading literature, acts of diagnostic listening enlist the listener's resources, such as associations, memories, intuitive curiosities, power of interpretations and understanding, in order to identify meanings. Honoring the stories of illness and placing humanity before science in delivery of care are becoming more prevalent.



## CONCLUSION

Narrative medicine has emerged in response to a commodified health care system that places corporate and bureaucratic concerns over the needs of the patient. (Dr. Charon). Generated from a confluence of sources including humanities and healing sciences, primary care medicine, narratology, and the study of doctor-patient relationships, narrative medicine is medical and dental treatments and practiced with the competence to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories of illness. By placing events with beginnings, middles, and ends, and by establishing connections among things using metaphor and figural language, narrative medicine helps doctors to recognize patients and diseases, convey knowledge, accompany patients through the ordeals of illness, and according to Dr. Rita Charon, can ultimately lead to more humane, ethical, and effective health care. Trained in medicine and in literary studies, Rita Charon is a pioneer of and authority on the emerging field of narrative medicine. In this important and long-awaited book she provides a comprehensive and systematic introduction to the conceptual principles underlying narrative medicine, as well as a practical guide for implementing narrative methods in health care.

The benefits of Narrative Medicine extend into alleviating caregiver burnout, where narrative and dialogue are at the forefront of such efforts. Through dialogue and story telling the visible and invisible factors that influence burnout can be brought into the light. Through this literature review, we hope to display the effectiveness of the tools of Narrative Medicine in the practice of dentistry and educate those who are unfamiliar with the field. This methodology should be placed in conjunction with the ADA's Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct as a professional standard and guide for Dentists. Ultimately this approach teaches about the strength of human connection and the integral fact that everyone carries a unique story within them. The five narrative features connected in medicine and dentistry which are interrelated are: Ethicality, Temporality, Singularity, Causality and Intersubjectivity. Finding profound and ethical connections with the single patients, in an one on one relationship, in order to change their behavior for better is what narrative medicine can accomplish.

