

Medical Humanities Readings & Sources

An Annotated Bibliography

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Anthologies

Anthologies provide short, meaningful pieces that can be addressed singly or in groups. These kinds of books allow you quick but useful insights into many aspects of the world of health care.

- Coles, Robert & Testa, Randy (eds): A Life in Medicine. A literary anthology. New York: The New Press, 2002.
Dr. Coles and his co-editor have compiled a compelling and moving volume of writings by writers both well-known and less so regarding medicine, physicians, illness, and the consequences of health issues. The book is divided into four parts arranged by qualities deemed desirable in doctors: altruism, knowledge, skill, and duty. Each section comprises fiction, essay, poetry. This anthology was used for nearly two decades in medical humanities courses offered by the department.
- Downie, RS (ed): The Healing Arts. An Oxford Illustrated Anthology. Oxford (UK):Oxford University Press, 1995.
This anthology, also heavily used in humanities courses in the College of Osteopathic Medicine, is aimed at health workers, including physicians, to deepen understanding of the world of health, illness, and healing. Pieces included date from centuries ago as well as more recently, examining human life and major life events, illnesses, and doctors in particular. Selections deal with people--doctors, patients, nurses, hospitals, chaplains, and visitors into sharp focus. Further, there are pieces dealing with research and ethics as well. Generally engaging and full of well-written work, the book suffers a bit from publishing only portions of certain works, but the student can generally find the full texts online. Selections from this compilation were used in various humanities courses.
- Gordon, Richard (ed): The Literary Companion to Medicine. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993 (out of print).
This group of writings was selected because the subject in most cases was doctors. Interactions with doctors, or by doctors. The volume comprises poetry, memoir, and essay, and many of the choices are less well-known than those in other anthologies.
- Reynold, Richard & Stone, John (eds): On Doctoring (3rd ed). New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
Drs. Reynold and Stone show care and thoughtfulness as they bring together in one volume much of value from writers as diverse as William Osler and John Donne. There are poems by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Robert Frost, and W.H. Auden. Pieces by well-known physician-writers such as Richard Selzer, Lewis Thomas and Dannie Abse leaven

the mix well. The works in this particular anthology have been extensively used in COM humanities electives.

Poetry

Multiauthor Collections

- Belli, Angela & Coulehan, Jack (eds): Blood & Bone. Poems by Physicians. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998.
This collection of poems by physicians deals with many facets of health care and its milieu, with doctors and their strengths and failings, and with the relationship of medicine to the wider culture.
- Belli, Angela & Coulehan, Jack (eds): Primary Care. More Poems by Physicians. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006.
More poetry from physicians delineating the world of medicine.
- LaCombe, MA & Hartman, TV (eds): In Whatever Houses We May Visit. An Anthology of Poems That Have Inspired Physicians. Philadelphia: ACP Press, 2008.
The editors have collected poems from masters of the form throughout history. Featured here are poems ranging from haiku by the Japanese master, Basho, to poems of the enlightenment (Wordsworth), and our own era.
- Herwaldt, Loreen: Patient Listening. A Doctor's Guide. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008.
Dr. Herwaldt, a faculty member of the Carver College of Medicine at the University of Iowa, found herself moved by stories of illness written by various well-known authors. She spent a year interviewing a number of them, subsequently converting their dialogue into a form she calls "found poems" by rearranging and eliminating needless portions. Each author—notables like Richard Selzer, Jane Smiley, and Oliver Sack read the "found poems" based on the interview and gave approval for publication. The book provide powerful images of the world of illness.

Single Author Collections

- Carver, Raymond: All of Us. The Collected Poems. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1996.
Collected by his widow, Tess Gallagher, this is the definitive collection of Carver's poems, arranged chronologically. Of particular note is the sequence beginning with his account of receiving bad medical news, "What the Doctor Said," delineating his terminal illness. His poems are particular favorites among medical students.
- Coulehan, Jack: Medicine Stone. Santa Barbara: Fithian Press, 2002.
Dr. Coulehan's poems capture the mystery, terror, joy, and satisfaction in living and practicing in the world of medicine. His poem, "The Man With Stars Inside," which is included, is a particular favorite of medical students.
- Chason, Cate: Poems for Medical Students. Husking Bee Books, 2014.
This small volume of poems was composed by the author in honor of her daughter Lillian, who died of acute respiratory distress syndrome provoked by influenza. While the collection is small, the emotions and events remain raw and painful on the printed page.

- Pereira, Peter. Saying the World. Port Townsend (WA):Copper Canyon Press, 2003. Dr. Pereira practices family medicine and writes poetry. This collection deals directly with his experiences in medical practice in Seattle. In particular, the poem, “Murmur” has been used during several humanities offerings.

Prose Collections

These volumes contain only prose—fiction or nonfiction or both in the same book. These particular works can serve as resources for new or added content, and may be either multiauthored or written by a single person. Much of these were written by physicians.

- Bulgakov, Mikhail: A Country Doctor’s Notebook. London: Harvill Press, 1995 (Michael Frayn trans. 1975)
These are a collection of semi-autobiographical fiction about a young doctor in early 20th century Russia. Lost or neglected for decades, they were rediscovered in the middle of the last century. “Baptism by Rotation” is one of the stories contained here that was used in several humanities electives.
- Crichton, Michael: Travels. New York: Perennial, 2002
Crichton earned his MD despite disliking medical school intensely. A fourth of this book contains his memoir of his medical student days, including his several attempts to quit and his horror of Gross Anatomy. “Cadaver,” the first piece, has been used a number of times in medical humanities courses.
- Coulehan, Jack (ed): Chekhov’s Doctors. A Collection of Chekhov’s Medical Tales. Kent (Ohio):Kent State University Press, 2003.
Dr. Coulehan has collected sixteen of the Russian master’s short stories, notably including “Anyuta,” his portrait of a distracted and cruel medical student, which was used several times in humanities electives.
- Kaminsky, Leah (ed): Writer, M.D. The Best Contemporary Fiction and Nonfiction by Doctors. New York: Vintage, 2012.
Notable physician-writers included in this collection include Ethan Canin, Atul Gawande, Oliver Sacks, and Abraham Verghese among others. According to the editor (herself a physician), the book seeks to see behind the doctor’s mask.
- Mukand, Jon (ed): Vital Lines. Contemporary Fiction About Medicine. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990.
An exceptional collection of fiction dealing with everything from the health care milieu to patient attitudes and experiences to doctors themselves. Particularly important are stories dealing with families and friends and social issues.
- Sacks, Oliver.
Several collections of prose highlight the career of Dr. Sacks, a neuropsychologist and writer. Notable are:
 - The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (1985)
 - An Anthropologist on Mars (1996)
 - A Leg to Stand On (1984)
 Dr. Sacks writes with a deeply human yet clinically penetrating voice.

- Selzer, Richard: Letters to a Young Doctor. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982. This is Dr. Selzer's most important collection. It contains "Imelda," "Mercy," and "Brute," arguably three of his most moving pieces. These sound like memoir, but may be fiction, or perhaps fictionalized memoir. Regardless, these three have been part of the medical humanities curriculum in several courses.
- Stone, John: In the Country of Hearts. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991. Dr. Stone's collection of memories of his patients and practice of cardiology. Useful for looking at the physician's viewpoint and life.
- Thomas, Lewis. Dr. Thomas was a prominent physician, medical educator and author. His column in The New England Journal of Medicine in the later 20th century was a part of the education of many young physicians. Of his several books, the following are most notable:
 - The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher (1975)
 - The Medusa and the Snail: More Notes of a Biology Watcher (1979)
 - Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony (1983)
 - A number of his essays, particularly "Leech, Leech, etc." were used in medical humanities

Textbooks, Monographs, and Other Teaching Materials

These are sources for the various subjects in Medical Humanities, divided by discipline

History of Medicine

- Duffin, Jacalyn (ed): Clio in the Clinic. History in Medical Practice. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. A valuable collection of essays on the value of history and its recognition in the practice of medicine. Physicians reveal their own approaches.
- Duffin, Jacalyn: History of Medicine. A Scandalously short introduction. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. A relatively brief but comprehensive introduction to the long history of medicine and healing. Duffin divides her text into the histories of individual scientific disciplines (Anatomy, Physiology, etc.) as well as covering epidemic diseases, technology and its advances. A particularly intriguing chapter covers how to research a question of history.
- Gevitz, Norman: The DOs (2nd ed). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Dr. Gevitz' history of the osteopathic profession remains definitive. Originally written as his doctoral dissertation and subsequently revised, this book is authoritative and has the advantage of being written by someone outside the profession of osteopathic medicine. Required reading in History of Medicine.
- Magner, Lois: A History of Medicine (2nd ed). New York: Informa Healthcare, 2007. This is a sweeping review of the history healing from Paleolithic healing and care to 20th century medicine. Dr. Magner's survey is perhaps less inclusive than Porter's

- medical history (below) but is a valuable introduction to the history of the healing art.
- Porter, Roy: The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A medical history of humanity. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.
A magisterial overview of the long history of human healing, beginning with the roots of medicine and ending in the 20th century. This history is a panorama of medicine coupled with an overarching intent to examine the thinking and practice of physicians and others. A basic text for teaching the subject.

Medical Humanities

- Dan, Bruce and Young, Roxanne K (eds): A Piece of My Mind. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.
The first collection of contributions to the JAMA series that began in the early 1980s. This particular collection contains the most explosive and controversial piece in the series, "It's Over, Debbie," detailing an act of euthanasia, that has been used numerous times in humanities electives. Other essays are also very powerful.
- Lown, Bernard: The Lost Art of Healing. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.
Part autobiography and part deeply philosophic discussion, Dr. Lown wrote this book at the apex of his outstanding medical career. Two chapters, "Words that Maim," and "Words that Heal," have been used in medical humanities several times.
- Young, Roxanne (ed): A Piece of My Mind. A new collection of essays from JAMA. AMA Press, 2000.
Further essays from the long-running series. These warrant further exploration and use.

Medicine in the Movies

- Alexander, Matthew et al (eds): Cinemeducation. Abingdon (UK): Radcliffe Publishing, 2006.
This collection of writings is intended as a guide to using cinema in medical education. Touched on are not only development of narrative competence by using film but also specific problems, situations, and populations. Not used much but likely to be useful.
- Cartwright, Lisa: Screening the Body. Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
Deals with using cinema in teaching medical subjects. Less useful for humanities.
- Dans, Peter E.: Doctors in the Movies. Bloomington (IL): Medi-Ed Press, 2000.
In this valuable compendium, Dr. Dans has collected columns written for The Pharos, the publication of Alpha Omega Alpha, dealing with movies. He has helpfully divided chapters into subjects such as "Hollywood Goes to Medical School," and "The Temple of Science" to group similar films. The book provides plot synopses, cast information, and a critical view of each of many movies included. This is a very valuable instructors' book when teaching medicine in the movies.

- Turow, Joseph: Playing Doctor. Television, Storytelling, and Medical Power. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
Although obviously a dated book, this monograph contains much information about the television genre of medical drama. Includes a history of the genre from its roots in movies to early dramas like “Medic” through the years of the TV version of M*A*S*H. Useful.

Narrative Medicine

- Charon, Rita: Narrative Medicine. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
This book provides a basis for the use of narrative in medical practices; it includes everything from how to accomplish close reading of narratives to ways to bridge the divides that separate health care professionals, families, and patients from each other. This is the text we used to design our course.
- Charon, Rita, et al: The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017
Likely to become a definitive text in the discipline of narrative medicine. Include much of value to faculty interested in designing or renewing their courses, particularly “nuts and bolts.” This is so new we didn’t use it very much but clearly has value.
- Greenhalgh, Trisha and Hurwitz, Brian (eds): Narrative Based Medicine. London: BMJ Books, 1996.
The editors have compiled an exceptional volume dealing with narrative in the practice of healing. From stories of illness to narratives in medicine and how to understand them the editors then deal with ways to teach and understand narrative. Examples provided have depth and resonance for today’s students.

Graphic Literature

- Fies, Brian: Mom’s Cancer. New York: Abrams Comicarts, 2006.
A personal memoir of a family in crisis when the matriarch develops cancer. Unlike many “comics” or “graphic novels” in the superhero mode, this little book captures the sadness, anger, confusion and misunderstandings that happen so often when a family member is ill. Students respond deeply to this one.
- Fischer, Lucy Rose: I’m New at Being Old. Minneapolis: Temuna Press, 2010.
A collection of poetic musings on aging and its vicissitudes, accompanied by the author’s own art. Very engaging, probably most useful as a whole.
- Marchetto, Marisa Acocella: Cancer Vixen. A true story. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.
The author is a professional cartoonist, published in Glamour and The New Yorker, who details her breast cancer from the discovery of a lump through the entire grueling ordeal. Her cartooning is excellent but her insights, bravery, and clear writing are a joy. Students who read this one were universally impressed.

- Pekar, Harvey and Brabner, Joyce: Our Cancer Year. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1994.
Harvey Pekar is famous for a series of graphic memoirs of his life entitled American Splendor (later made into a movie), illustrated by various cartoonists. In this book, co-authored by his wife, Pekar tells the story of his cancer in considerable and moving detail.
- Small, David: Stitches. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009.
This wonderful book is another graphic memoir; this one deals with Small's family and childhood, his physician-father and strict mother, "odd" grandmother and his childhood illness. Through his eyes, we see how it must have looked as a small, frightened, and ill child. This book was a finalist for the National Book Award. This book has featured prominently in medical humanities. (Incidentally, Small's father was a DO.)
- Trudeau, G.B.: The Long Road Home. One step at a time. Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2005.
A compilation of strips from the long-running Doonesbury comic. These feature B.D., the dumb jock conservative and his loss of a leg in combat. We see his initial wounding and near-death, his reaction, rehabilitation, and family reactions. Funny and moving.