



OHSU CENTER FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE

# Impact Report 2024



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The Center for Ethics is uniquely poised to seize new opportunities to enhance compassion, empowerment and ethics in health care and health education.

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**KATIE H. STOWERS, D.O.**

Ronald W. Naito Director in Serious Illness Education  
Interim Director, OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care



*This year we celebrated the remarkable career of Dr. Susan Tolle, who retired after courageously building and leading the OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care for 34 years. The foundation on which she built the Center – collaboration, compassion, innovation and advocacy – is being lost elsewhere in today’s increasingly fraught health care system to a heightened focus on revenue generation and productivity. The Center is fortunate to maintain stability and dedication to its values by being 96% funded by private philanthropy and endowments. This allows our exceptionally capable faculty and staff the freedom to be flexible, creative and collaborative in pursuing our mission. Together, through your generosity, we are making a difference by bringing humanism back to medicine and advocating for those who need it most.*

*Katie*

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## Program in Compassionate Communication

**Cliff Coleman, M.D., MPH, Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication**

- Developed one new, required clinical skills lab for medical students focused on providing trauma-informed care to patients.
- Gave nine international, national and institutional presentations on health literacy and clear communication. Specific topics included systemic racism and empowerment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Published three peer-reviewed manuscripts about health literacy and clear communication training for health care professionals and trainees.
- Validated a novel method to quantify the use of medical jargon during clinical encounters to help evaluate and monitor the impact of teaching clear communication skills in the curriculum.

## Serious Illness Education

**Katie H. Stowers, D.O., Ronald W. Naito Director in Serious Illness Education**



**TalkOregon Brings Communication Skills Training to the Great Outdoors:** Drs. Katie H. Stowers, Cliff Coleman, and Madline Boyd pose for a picture at the Klamath Falls Outdoor Science School during communication skills training for the OHSU Family Medicine Residency program at Cascades East Family Medicine in Klamath Falls.

- Led the 7th annual testing of medical students in compassionate communication skills. The Center has tested more than 1,000 students since the onset of testing seven years ago.
- Directed 41 workshops teaching medical residents, fellows and practicing clinicians serious illness communication skills.
- Built a partnership with the OHSU Family Medicine residency program at Cascades East Medical Center in Klamath Falls, with grant support from The Kinsman Foundation, to mentor Drs. Madeline Boyd and Kristi Coleman to become communication skills educators and create sustainable communication skills training into the residency program. Together they led 6 serious illness communication skills workshops this year.

## Professionalism and Comfort Care

**Tyler Tate, M.D., M.A., Director of Professionalism and Comfort Care**  
*Funded by the Miles J. Edwards Chair in Professionalism and Comfort Care Endowment*

- Co-chaired the 33rd annual Kinsman Bioethics Conference. The conference was held virtually with 170 attendees from across the state, and featured four plenary talks and eight breakout sessions throughout the day.
- Published four peer-reviewed manuscripts on ethics, palliative care and disability.
- Received two prestigious awards: 2024 Faculty Scholar with the Greenwall Foundation and 2024 Hastings Center Cunniff-Dixon Early-Career Physician Award.
- Directed the Living with Life-Threatening Illness elective course. This course continues to be rated as the best class in medical school by students. This past year we received two letters from former students explaining how this course changed the trajectory of their medical career.

Dr. Tate joined Stanford University in summer 2024. The protected time and dedicated resources made possible by the Miles J. Edwards Endowment made this incredible opportunity possible. We celebrate Dr. Tate's success and are excited to see what his future holds.

## Oregon POLST Program

### Christine Mullowney, M.D., Medical Director of the Oregon POLST Program

*Funded by the Bill and Helen Jo Whitsell Endowment for Ethics*

- Wrote revised *Guidelines on POLST Use for Persons with Significant Disabilities Who Are Now Near the End of Life*. These guidelines emphasize the importance of shared decision-making so that patients, especially those with intellectual or developmental disabilities, can fully participate in end-of-life treatment decisions.
- Launched a Community Engagement Committee with representation from Oregon's diverse regional and cultural communities. Members of the committee provide community-specific insights and feedback, including background information and key perspectives, to improve POLST understanding, utilization, education and outreach efforts.
- Partnered with the POLST Registry to review POLST use data at OHSU to guide quality improvement efforts, particularly improving usage of ePOLST and reducing the 'Yes' to CPR rate on POLST forms.

## Ethics Education

*Funded by the Madeline Brill Nelson Chair in Ethics Education*

This Chair currently remains unfilled until the search for a new director for the Center for Ethics is complete. With support from all Center faculty, staff and many Center volunteers, the Center remains dedicated to advancing the ethics education mission through established programming.

- Dr. Cliff Coleman led two Pain Intersession elective courses focusing on ethics and inequities in pain treatment.
- Dr. Katie H. Stowers coordinated the Madeline Brill Nelson Speaker Series in Medical Ethics and brought Justin Sanders, M.D., M.S., an international leader in the field of palliative care and serious illness communication, to OHSU for two days.
- David Clarke, M.D., moderated the Daniel Labby Seminar in Medical Ethics exploring the ethics of using AI programs in medicine.

## Educating Future Health Care Ethics Leaders

*Funded by the Educate Future Health Care Ethics Leaders Endowed Fund*

Dr. Tyler Tate led the second Oregon Bioethics and Humanities Colloquium (OBHC) speaker series. The seven-speaker series kicked off in the fall by hosting Dr. Lainie Friedman Ross, a national expert in pediatrics and bioethics, for two days at OHSU and University of Portland. With support from Osamu Muramoto, M.D., M.A., and the M. Lowell Edwards Foundation, the lecture series focuses on a variety of bioethics topics from a humanities lens.



**Fostering Compassion in Caring for Patients Nearing End-of-Life:** Dr. Tyler Tate (top right) and co-teachers, Dr. Sara Taub and Susan Hedlund (top left), along with Ethics Education Coordinator, Dave Hoyt (top left), take a photo with medical students in the 2023 Living with Life Threatening Illness elective course on the last day of class.



**Honoring Inspiration and Leadership:** Drs. Susan Tolle and Katie H. Stowers pose for a photo at retirement reception in Dr. Tolle's honor. Dr. Tolle retired after 34 years of leading the Center for Ethics in Health Care and the Oregon POLST Program. Dr. Stowers now serves as Interim Director of the Center for Ethics.



**Establishing Healing Connections:** Dr. Justin Sanders delivers his presentation as the annual Madeline Brill Nelson speaker for the Department of Medicine Grand Rounds. During his talk, Dr. Sanders emphasized the importance of establishing healing connections to patients and their families.

“

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

”

**MARGARET MEAD**



**Katie H. Stowers, D.O.**

Ronald W. Naito Director in Serious  
Illness Education



**Cliff Coleman, M.D., MPH**

Doris and Mark Storms Chair in  
Compassionate Communication



**Christine Mallowney, M.D.**

Medical Director of the Oregon  
POLST Program

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

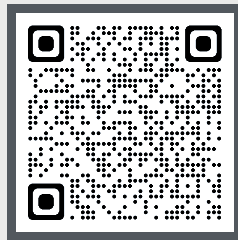
**Katie H. Stowers, D.O.**

Interim Director, Center for Ethics in Health Care  
503-494-4466 | ethics@ohsu.edu

**Liz Arrington, CSPG**

Senior Director of Development, OHSU Foundation  
503-552-0716 | arringt@ohsu.edu

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OHSU CENTER  
FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE:**



**OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care**  
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd., UHN-86  
Portland, OR 97239-3098  
ohsu.edu/center-for-ethics