



Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first year as Interim Director, I'm filled with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude. While the term "interim" can imply a period of stagnation, our Center has defied expectations.

Despite the challenges posed by three unfilled positions, we've maintained the momentum of our established programs by drawing on the expertise of our talented OHSU ethics community. This collaborative spirit has been instrumental in ensuring the continuity of our core offerings, and in expanding our programming.

A key factor in our ability to thrive and grow is the financial stability provided by our endowments. This reliable funding source has enabled us to invest in new initiatives and support our mission.

I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together, and I look forward to building upon this momentum in the year to come.

With Appreciation,

Katie H. Stowers, DO
Interim Director
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OBHC Series Launch Explores Link Between Neurology and Bioethics

The Center for Ethics launched the 2024-25 Oregon Bioethics and Humanities Colloquium (OBHC) series in October by hosting Paul Ford, PhD, director of Cleveland Clinic's Center for Bioethics, and founder and director of Cleveland Clinic's Neuroethics program. During his two-day visit, Dr. Ford spoke about navigating ethical dilemmas in illnesses of the brain, met with several stakeholder groups at OHSU, including OHSU's new clinical ethicist. Dr. Ford also met with medical students from the ethics interest group, and convened a meeting of the Community Ethics League, a group of ethicists from regional hospitals, to discuss wider collaborations and the need for institutional program support. The 2024-25 OBHC series is co-chaired by Center for Ethics' Senior Scholar, Dr. Eran Klein, of OHSU and long-time Center for Ethics volunteer, Dr. Prasanna Krishnasamy, from Legacy Health. The series continues with monthly virtual lectures. The full schedule can be found on the Center for Ethics website.

Inaugural Health Literacy Symposium Inspires Creativity and Innovation

On October 17th the Center for Ethics co-hosted the inaugural OHSU Health Literacy Symposium, chaired by **Dr. Cliff Coleman, Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication**. During the symposium, 123 OHSU faculty, staff, learners, and administrators gathered to share their passion for improving the patient experience through clear health communication. Speakers included the OHSU Provost, senior healthcare administrators, research faculty, clinical faculty, and medical students. The symposium kicked off the grassroots effort to transform OHSU into a health literate organization. Becoming a health literate organization will make it easier for people to navigate, understand, and use health information and services. The symposium has received much positive attention across the institution, creating energy and inspiration within OHSU members and their teams to prioritize health literacy in their work, and try innovative approaches that will improve patient outcomes and access to usable health information.

Living with Life-Threatening Illness Course Kicks Off It's 17th Year

The Living with Life-Threatening Illness course began its 17th year of classes in October. This year, Dr. Sara Taub is serving as the Course Director after teaching the class for more than five years. Susan Hedlund has helped facilitate the course almost since it's inception. Dr. Ladawna Gievers has been with the course since 2017, while this is Dr. Robin Brown's first year. See how the course has impacted faculty and students over the years in the newsletter's November Spotlight.

For help in making a gift to the Center for Ethics, please contact Liz Arrington at the OHSU Foundation at arringt1@ohsu.edu or 503-552-0716.





November 2024

November Spotlight

The Living with Life-Threatening Illness Course



Faculty of the Living with Life-Threatening Illness course pose for a picture (from left to right):

Susan Hedlund, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C

Ladawna Gievers, MD, Robin Brown, MD

Sara Taub, MD, MBE

Facilitating the Course is a Meaningful Experience: Faculty Share Why They Enjoy Teaching it.

Sara Taub: “The beginning of medical school is a curious time. Students learn to drink from the proverbial “firehose” of information during the preclinical years, assimilating basic science and introductory concepts in medicine, as a foundation for the clinical learning that follows. The classroom setting can feel quite disconnected from what made students decide to pursue a career in medicine. In this course, we connect with the more humanistic side of medicine and all let ourselves be moved and inspired by what it means to be part of a caring profession.”

Robin Brown: “It does not take long to see the magic of the course unfold. Certainly, there is a gravity in discussing serious illness and end of life care. But the magic comes from an experience of common humanity that is cultivated. I don’t get to see the medical students interact with their patient-teachers, but it is clear in the classroom that they make a choice to be vulnerable and gracious to themselves and to one another. This shows a choice against othering our patients, against a history of medical paternalism, and to a future of compassionate physicians and skilled communicators.”

Susan Hedlund: “I continue to be so impressed with the level of engagement and curiosity on the part of the medical students. Throughout the years, former students will tell us that the course significantly changes how they view people with serious illnesses, and the opportunity to engage with their patient-teachers significantly reduces their anxiety. Patient-teachers say that being able to “teach” adds meaning to their lives. It is such a special course that has a lasting impact on all involved.”

Taking the Course Has a Lasting Impact: Students Share How the Course Has Influenced Them

“It was a tremendous experience to have adjacent to all the technical material we learn as medical students, reminding me of the humanity that underlies medicine. As I get closer to when I need to start thinking more seriously about what specialty I will apply to, I have this class to thank for my gravitation towards fields that involve palliative care.”

“The class became a very formative experience for me in terms of thinking about death and illness from the perspective of a clinician...Conversations about health and spirituality brought us closer together... There is something really important about talking about death when it comes to relating to others.”