IMH Film Release - Dax Cowart, Forty Years

Later: Reflections on Patients' Rights

During the last week of April, IMH faculty Dr. Jerome Crowder and videographer Michael Brims from the University of Houston-Clear Lake premiered their film centering on Dax Cowart, an attorney noted for the ethical issues raised by efforts to sustain his life against his wishes. Cowart’s case has become highly famous in the realm of medical ethics. This film was shown in Galveston’s Rosenberg Library and Houston’s Aurora Picture Show. This film was supported by Humanities Texas.

Nearly forty years ago, Dax Cowart was in a gas pipeline explosion that caused third-degree burns over 68% of this body, and eventually left him blind, hearing impaired, and without fingers. Throughout his hospitalization, at Parkland Hospital in Dallas and later at John Sealy Hospital in Galveston, he asked his doctors to please stop the extremely painful daily tank treatments that were preventing skin infection. He stated that he would rather die than continue to endure the daily pain in order to have a greatly diminished future quality of life. In the early 1970s the patient’s legal right to refuse treatment was not well recognized, and so Dax’s pleas were not honored.

Die, became a staple in classrooms in the new subject of “bioethics.” Eventually Dax consented to the final round of skin grafting so that he could leave the hospital and go home, but he had a prolonged series of mental health problems, including two suicide attempts, before he improved enough to complete a law degree in 1986.

Later, Dax, often working alongside Dr. William Winslade, became an active spokesperson for patients’ rights to consent to or refuse treatment. He now speaks publicly on behalf of patient rights to crowds all over the United States and abroad. He has been a keynote speaker to kick off UTMB’s Practice of Medicine 2 (POM2), Humanities, Ethics, and Professionalism course for several years.

Cowart’s life and his reflections on what has happened to him continue to challenge medicine’s understanding of itself as a moral practice. This film considers Dax’s life in 2012 to capture his more mature ideas about his own case and the legacy that it has now left in the fields of bioethics and law on video for future generations of students and scholars. Furthermore it explores the relationships Dax has with his family, his friends and his professional colleagues, the challenges he faces as he ages, and the things that are most important to him today.

However, a Sealy Hospital psychiatrist, Robert White, recorded a videotaped interview with Dax dramatizing his daily pain and also his reasoning behind his wish to cease treatment; this film, Please Let Me
IMH Around Campus: Osler Club Meeting

On Tuesday, May 27, the Meeting of the 63rd UTMB Osler Club will feature dinner and a dialogue from Rachel Pearson entitled, *Can Empathetic Physicians have Aequanimitas? The Roman Roots of Oslerian Practice.* This event will be held in the Open Gates Conference Center at 2419 Sealy Avenue in Galveston from 5:30-7:30 pm. Admission is free, but space is limited. Reservations are advised. For reservations, or to register for CME credit, contact Rosemary Lindley or Sharron Mosley, ext. 79680 or mcadem@utmb.edu.

Rachel is an IMH Graduate Student, MD/PhD Student, and Osler Student Scholar. She has a B.A. from the Plan 2 Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin, where she received the Robert C. Solomon Scholarship in the Arts and Philosophy. She has worked variously as a journalist, a patient advocate, and an actress in a traveling children's theatre troupe, and her creative work has appeared in the Mid-American Review, the Indiana Review, and on the air through Chicago Public Radio's Third Coast Audio Festival. Rachel is currently an MD/PhD candidate at the Institute for the Medical Humanities, with a keen interest in issues of the mind, the brain, and narrative medicine.

IMH in the Media

**Dollars for doctors**-KRGV-TV (Weslaco), April 17, 2014

Some Rio Grande Valley doctors get thousands of dollars in cash, and other forms of payment, from pharmaceutical companies. The totals climb into six figures for some. The payments are not illegal, but medical ethicists, and even the federal government, say they do raise serious questions about the potential for conflicts of interest. "They said this is how you make a buck in this pharmaceutical industry," said Dr. Howard Brody, director of the Medical Humanities Institute at UTMB. Brody said pharmaceutical companies spend $56 billion each year marketing new drugs. Doctors get money, dinners, trips and tickets to high-profile sporting events, among other things. "It's creating serious problems about professional responsibility and integrity," Brody said.

**UTMB study seeks to engage community in medical ethics issues**

Galveston Daily News, April 21, 2014

UTMB researchers are hopeful that discussions among non-health care communities may provide insight to the ethical questions that can arise with rising costs and emerging technologies and procedures. Researchers also want to learn more about how people in different social circles form opinions or make decisions about their health care. That could help shape health policy. The study is part of a project overseen by Dr. James Goodwin and funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute. To complete the study, UTMB faculty worked with two different communities in Galveston.

“Nowhere in the U.S., right now, is there regular engagement of ordinary citizens in bioethics dialogue in a sustained manner,” study coordinator Dr. Howard Brody observed. “We are trying to show at UTMB, taking advantage of the cultural diversity of our region, that this is a feasible way to enrich bio-

**IMH Colloquium: Kristy Williams**

On Thursday, April 10, the IMH hosted a presentation delivered by IMH Visiting Scholar Dr. Kristy Williams entitled, *Just Say to NOTA: A Proposal for a Regulated Market for Cadaver Organs.* This presentation was based on her article, *Just Say No to Nota: Why the Prohibition of Compensation for Human Transplant Organs in Nota Should Be Repealed and a Regulated Market for Cadaver Organs Instituted.*

Dr. Williams’ research at the Institute of Medical Humanities involves the legal and ethical issues surrounding physician-patient conflict over the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment. Her interest in the intersections of law and medicine stems from her diverse academic background in both the sciences and the law.
**IMH Former Visiting Scholar Accolades: Jane Chance**

Please join us in congratulating one of our former visiting scholars, **Dr. Jane Chance** who recently published a poetry book entitled, *Only Begetter*. Dr. Chance spent time at the IMH as a visiting scholar from September 2011 to April 2012.

Jane Chance, the Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Professor Emerita in English at Rice University, has taught medieval literature for forty years, first, at the University of Saskatchewan-Saskatoon, after receiving her Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois (1971), and then at Rice University (1973). She has also published twenty-one books and nearly a hundred articles and reviews, on mythography and classical influence on medieval literature; Old and Middle English literature, especially Chaucer; medieval women; and modern medievalism (Tolkien in particular). You can read her bio [here](#).

Dr. Chance’s newest book has been very well-received by her colleagues, including the following review by Stacy R. Nigliazzo, B.S., R.N., author of *Scissored Moon*, finalist for the 2014 Julie Suk Award and the Bob Bush Memorial prize for poetry.

> “*Only Begetter* is refreshing, poignant, and remarkably tender. The lyrical voice of Jane Chance resonates beautifully through poems of happiness and sorrow, redemption and despair. The imagery painted in its pages is breathtaking. Taken singularly or cumulatively, these are poems to be celebrated and savored for years to come. An exceptional debut collection!”

*Only Begetter* is currently available for purchase [here](#).

**IMH Former Visiting Scholar Accolades: Rebecca Laroche**

A heartfelt thanks goes to **Dr. Rebecca Laroche**, who recently made a generous donation to the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) in honor of the Institute for the Medical Humanities. The goal of the GBF is to implement conservation, restoration, and education initiatives to ensure Galveston Bay remains a safe, productive, and beautiful natural resource. As a result of the GBF’s work, Galveston Bay is enjoyed by thousands of residents and visitors to the bay area.

During her time with the Institute from January through August 2007, Rebecca Laroche completed her current book manuscript, *Herbal Rhetoric: Englishwomen’s Texts and Medical Authority, 1550-1650*, and submitted it for publication. This book is available for purchase [here](#).

Her research in part demonstrates that women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries owned large and expensive volumes of medical texts and wrote on and about these texts with authority. This book has been cited by Dr. Sheri McCord:

> “Historically salient and rhetorically savvy, Laroche’s archival work extends the conversation on herbal remedies began by historians and literary critics by considering the crucial issue of women’s’ active involvement in medical practice.”

~ Courtesy of Donna Vickers, IMH
Tori edits footage on iMovie for her digital storytelling project.

Excerpts: During the summer of 2013, I co-facilitated Creative Expressions (CEP) as part of rising second-year medical students’ course in Humanities, Ethics, and Professionalism at UTMB. As a rising third year Ph.D. student at IMH, I found myself in a liminal space—about the same age as many of the medical students in our course but without my professors’ many years of teaching experience. Moreover, this was my first opportunity mentoring medical students in artistic endeavors... I agreed to mentor Tori... The result was quite a success. When it was time to present, Tori delighted everyone in our class by showing a very humorous attempt at playing the viola. The peg didn’t have to fit to make music. The creative expression, for her, was in the struggle, the process—accepting one’s mistakes and learning to make light of the imperfections... In my eyes, Tori certainly achieved her goal, and she taught me that mentoring isn’t about playing Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star perfectly or about fitting a string on a peg, but supporting my student through the creative process and appreciating at her accomplishments every step of the way.

Per the acknowledgements, several IMH members provided comments and editorial suggestions, including Jerome Crowder, Anne Rudnick, and Nicole Piomonte.

Erica and Tori presented their work and co-facilitated a CME-accredited workshop on digital storytelling on April 10th at the Global Alliance for Arts & Health, Enhancing Lives through Arts & Health 25th Anniversary Conference & Celebration being held in Houston, TX. Their presentation is entitled, Shaping Digital Stories: Creative Explorations in Medical Education.


Abstract: Chauncey D. Leake (1896-1978) occupies a unique place in the history of American bioethics. A pharmacologist, he was largely an autodidact in both history and philosophy, and believed that ethics should ideally be taught to medical students by those with philosophical training. After pioneering work on medical ethics in the 1920’s, he helped to lay the groundwork for important centers for bioethics and medical humanities at two institutions where he worked, the University of California-San Francisco and the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston. Understanding Leake’s role in American bioethics requires navigating a number of paradoxes—why he was respectfully in his time but largely forgotten today; how in the 1920’s he could write forward-thinking pieced that anticipated many of the themes taken up by bioethics a half-century later, yet played a largely reactionary role when the new bioethics actually arrived; and why he advocated turning to philosophy and philosophers for a proper understanding of bioethics, yet appeared to misunderstand philosophical ethics.

* Per the acknowledgements, several IMH graduate students and recent alumni provided valuable research assistance to this piece, including Randall Horton, Peggy De termeeyer, Alina Bennett, Susan Pulver, D. McCammon and Margaret Warlaw.

~ Information Courtesy of Donna Vickers, IMH
Upcoming Event: Colloquia

The Samuel G. Dunn Lectureship
In the Medical Humanities

The Eye, Ocular Diseases, and Visual Artists

By

Richard H. Fish, M.D.
Retina Consultants of Houston
Clinical Associate Professor at
Weill Cornell Medical College and
Baylor College of Medicine

Thursday, May 8, 2014
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Ann Milligan Gray Room
The Tremont House

Reception to Follow
For further information, please go to:
http://imh.utmb.edu/visual-image-conference

This conference is scheduled to begin with a reception in the afternoon of Thursday, May 8, and conclude in the afternoon of Saturday, May 10, 2014. We will bring together scholars, clinicians, scientific investigators and artists to discuss the role of visual images in the medical humanities: how they are being created, circulated, used in medical settings and beyond. We are interested in recognizing how the visualization of health impact patients and healers (broadly defined) in dynamic ways to develop new languages in which to speak to and about them with people around the world. We see this conference as the first step in establishing a collaborative dialogue regarding the contemporary and historical status of the visual image within the medical humanities through a series of follow-up meetings and projects held in USA & Europe.

Thank you for your overwhelming interest and response to our call for papers!

The presenters have been selected and we are developing the program now. Topics will include:

- Medical procedures and the visual image
- The visualization of the medical environment
- The patient’s self-image / the medic’s self-image
- The medical image and historical change
- Images and ethical Issues
- Visual representation of aging
- Contexts of creation, circulation and use

Sponsors
- Institute for the Medical Humanities, UTMB, TX
- Honors College, Univ. Houston, TX
- Art & Design Research Institute, Univ. Ulster, UK

Co-organizers
- Jerome Crowder, UTMB
- Dan Price, Univ. Houston
- Terrence Wright, Univ. Ulster
The Texas Medical Jurisprudence Examination:
A Self-Study Guide


Price: $100 including shipping and handling

You can view the Table of Contents and read the Introduction HERE:

If you need additional information please contact Beverly Claussen either by email at beclauss@utmb.edu or by phone at (409)772-2376.

Introduction: All physicians licensed to practice medicine in Texas must pass an examination on Texas Medical Jurisprudence. This examination covers primarily statutory and administrative law rather than case law. The summaries in this Study Guide attempt to assist physicians in gaining access to portions of the law that the editors believe are most important to the practice of medicine.

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Please contact us at: d1ramire@utmb.edu