IMH WELCOMES VISITING SCHOLAR

The Holocaust. The epitome of evil. Survivors, children of survivors, scholars, documentarians, artists, filmmakers, and many more have been trying to make sense of the atrocities for over half a century. For nearly two decades, David Brenner, Ph.D. has been one of those scholars. Yet, instead of strictly examining the historical events, Brenner’s interdisciplinary background has led him to study how the Holocaust has been depicted in popular culture and used in pedagogy for students of all ages.

Originally from Houston, with a doctorate from the University of Texas in 1993 in Germanic Studies, Brenner spent time teaching at the University of Colorado, Kent State, and the University of Konstanz in Germany before returning to Texas to teach Comparative Literature and Jewish Studies as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Houston. He is the author of two books, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity* and *German-Jewish Popular Culture before the Holocaust*, in addition to numerous articles and book chapters on Jewish identity, popular culture, and the Holocaust. His current book project, entitled *Schindler’s Shoah: Teaching the Holocaust in the Age of Globalization*, focuses on the pedagogy of genocide, at schools and universities in the U.S., Germany, Israel and elsewhere.

During his two-month stay as a visiting scholar for the Institute for the Medical Humanities at UTMB, Brenner plans to explore what relevance the history of the Holocaust might have for medical education today. He hopes to learn firsthand what it means to teach ethics in a medical school by sitting in on some of the Humanities, Ethics, and Professionalism (HEP) classes. Until the end of July, as Brenner works on Schindler’s Shoah, he strongly encourages members of the IMH/UTMB community to visit his office and looks forward to interactions with students and faculty. You can reach him by email at thedavidbrenner@gmail.com.

For Brenner, one question informs his pedagogical approach more than others: Is it always useful to consider the Holocaust as the embodiment of “absolute evil?” Put differently: is it not equally valuable for students to attempt to understand, but not to excuse, what motivated the Nazi “monsters?” Instead of demonizing the doctors and medical clinicians who perpetrated these atrocities, recent scholarship has found that many German health professionals saw themselves as doing research that was “advancing society” and/or “defending the nation.” Just as Spielberg produced *Schindler’s List* after the world learned of the genocide in the former Yugoslavia, so too does Brenner see the Holocaust not as something “untouchable” or “unrepresentable” but as a series of historical events comparable to other genocides.
Rebecca Hester presented “Cultural Competence: Addressing the Relationship between Health Disparities and Professional Development in Medicine” at the UTMB Internal Medicine Grand Rounds on June 2.


Howard Brody presented, “Health Reform, Cost Containment, and Physicians’ Professional Responsibility” at the UTMB Family Medicine Grand Rounds on June 16th.


Michele Carter, Bernadette McKinney, and Jeff Farroni, with the Institute for Translational Sciences, presented at the IMH Colloquium on June 14. The title of this presentation was “Humanities Engagement with the Institute for Translational Sciences.”

IMH Visiting Scholar, David A. Brenner, presented “Medical Ethics and the Holocaust” at the IMH Brown Bag on June 28.

IMH FACULTY NEWS

Arlene Macdonald attended the annual conference of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) in Calgary, Alberta from June 13 – 15. The conference was entitled “Human Rights in Canada: New Realities, New Directions.”

Macdonald also attended the annual meeting of the International Society for the Study of Religion in Aix-en-Provence, France from June 30 – July 3. The conference was entitled “Religion and Economy in a Global World.” Macdonald was part of a ‘working group’ panel, reporting results from research conducted as part of the Religion and Diversity Project. Specifically, she is examining how young adults of immigrant background view (and experience) religion in the workplace.

Laura D. Hermer presented “A Case for the Reinvention of Medicaid as a Federal Program” at the American Society of Law, Medicine, and Ethics’ 33th Annual Health Law Professors’ Conference in Chicago on June 10. Hermer will be speaking on the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) on providing care for the poor and elderly in a Grand Rounds presentation at Chambers Health/Bayside Community Hospital in Anahuac, TX in July.

Hermer is beginning work on a grant to create a graphic, map-based interface for the Texas Smoke-Free Ordinance Database, as part of a larger project with the American Lung Association, the University of Houston, and Air Alliance Houston to provide a one-stop, web-based location providing real-time information for residents of the greater Houston area on air quality.

Anne Hudson Jones served as a faculty leader for the International Summer Symposium “On Healers and Healing: Exploring the Why, What and How of Medical Humanities Pedagogy,” sponsored by the Center for Literature, Medicine and Biomedical Humanities at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, June 7-10. The symposium began with her session on “Why We Use Literature in Medical Humanities Courses: Measuring Outcomes?” Tied to the symposium are two publications: a special issue of Journal of Medical Humanities that will feature essays and responses generated during the seminar, and an anthology of essential literary texts, also titled On Healers and Healing, that will be a part of the Literature and Medicine series published by Kent State University Press.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

MD/PHD student Rimma Osipov guest-edited the July issue of Virtual Mentor, an AMA online medical ethics publication geared toward medical students, residents, and medical educators. The July issue, titled Physician Writers explores ethical and professionalism questions that arise when physicians and medical students write about patients, whether it be in the medical chart, in a peer-reviewed journal, in a popular memoir or through online social media. Howard Brody contributed an article entitled “The House of God—Is It Pertinent 30 Years Later?” The journal is available at http://virtualmentor.ama-assn.org/site/current.html.
June will bring the conclusion of another year of graduate student participation on the Joint Admission Medical Program (JAMP). Alina Bennett and Sheena Eagan Chamberlin have been co-facilitating the Medical Ethics module during which they have been training Rimma Osipov who will be taking over as lead facilitator next year. Professor Jones provided curriculum support and guest speakers have included Professors Howard Brody, Jason Glenn, and Laura Hermer.

Alina Bennett participated in the 60th Annual Pediatric Review and Update held June 17-18 at the San Luis Conference Center in Galveston. She co-facilitated a session with pediatrician Susie Gerik entitled: “A Journey Toward Meaning: Making Sense with Parents of Pediatric Patients.” The focus of the presentation is on working with parents who may be struggling due to the often stressful experiences that occur when children are unwell. Specifically, she focused on provider-parent communication within four areas: practicing praise, conflict resolution, the power of apology, and living well at work.

Jan C. Heller gave a presentation titled “A Framework for Allocation of Scarce Resources in Mass Critical Care: A Review and an Ethical Critique” to 40-50 otolaryngology physicians (ENT or Ear, Nose, and Throat) during their annual Byron Bailey Surgical Society Meeting at the Moody Gardens Hotel in Galveston on 25 June. The framework is part of a larger publication* that reviews our readiness to respond to the challenges of national or even international pandemic and deals with the ethics of triage under conditions of radical scarcity, when our entire society could be at risk of collapsing.

Heller briefly reviewed the recommendations of the framework’s authors, highlighting their ethical arguments and assumptions, and then discussed ways their suggestions could be refined when “breaking ties”-- when two or more patients who are equally eligible need the only bed and ventilator available. These are tragic and hard choices, and physicians are not normally charged with making them. Under these extreme conditions, it is envisioned that such a choice would be actually made by a triage officer and the physicians present would be required to implement it. The framework proposed that such ties should be dealt with by a “first come, first served” principle, but Heller argued that, all other things being equal, they should instead consider saving people between the ages of late adolescence and late middle age. The reason for this change is that saving the very young and the very old would put greater strains on the survivors of the pandemic and perhaps reduce the number of people available to rebuild a shattered society. It was a provocative proposal, one Heller was not advocating but one he wanted them to consider, and it occasioned a vigorous discussion among the participants.

The National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, NM will host Jerome Crowder’s photographic exhibit, Urban Dreams/Sueños Urbanos: The Search for a Better Life in Bolivia from July 10 to October 8, 2011. The exhibit addresses migration by members of the Aymara indigenous groups in Bolivia from a self-sustaining rural society into an urban cash economy; a migration away from their extended family; from their source of food production; and from the many cultural practices common to rural life. “As an anthropologist, my goal is to better understand Aymara migrants’ adaptation strategies for living in the city, while as a photographer, I explore their process through images.” Crowder will give a talk at the opening to the exhibit at the end of the month.

*Crowder exhibits in NM

HELLER PRESENTS AT BYRON BAILEY SURGICAL SOCIETY

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