



University of Michigan Teaching Innovation Prize

2009 WINNER



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Drs. Kumagai and Perlman are accepting this award on behalf of the volunteers, students, faculty, and staff of the Family Centered Experience Program.

Sponsors:

- Office of the Provost
- Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)
- University Libraries

The Family Centered Experience Program: Patients as Teachers in Fostering Empathy and Patient-Centered Care

Innovation Description

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) is an innovative two-year program that is part of the required curriculum at U-M's medical school and involves using the power of patients' stories to foster empathy and patient-centered care. In the FCE, pairs of medical students make scheduled visits over two years to the homes of volunteer patients and their families in order to listen to the volunteers' stories about chronic illness and its care.

These home visits, as well as readings, assignments, and small group discussions, serve as a foundation for the students to explore the experience of chronic illness from the patient's perspective. One of a few pioneering programs in the U.S., FCE is the most comprehensive, with an active research arm.

FCE is built on an extensive conceptual framework grounded in theories of empathy and moral development, adult learning, and transformative education. It prioritizes faculty development so that instructors can lead small-group activities involving student-led discussions and interactions, as well as interpretative projects that capture the students' understanding of the experience of illness.

<http://www.med.umich.edu/lrc/fce/index.html>

Student Comments

"I think that it made me more open to working with people with chronic illness because it's just kind of a matter of getting to know them and finding out what's important to them. The human side of treating people is very appealing to me: long term care and knowing your patients."

"Not only did I learn lessons about patient-provider communication and about cultural sensitivity in medical practice, but I learned about the natures of suffering and loss, and of empathy and equality. The FCE has shaped my understanding of what it means to heal as a doctor, and as a person."

"Unlike every other class taken by first- and second-year medical students, The Family Centered Experience challenges students to assume the role of a patient or family member as they interact with the medical community. I have found most patients judge their physicians not on pure medical knowledge but rather on the physician's ability to interact, empathize and communicate with patients; skills learned not by reading text books or attending lectures but by spending time with real people who live with illness every day."

"Drs. Kumagai and Perlman dignify the experience of human illness, rather than dissect it as we are so used to as medical students. Their lectures epitomize the goals these programs serve: to teach medical students, the future generation of medical care, how to heal, rather than just manipulate pathophysiology."

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Family Centered Experience website



Example of an FCE Interpretive Project:
A Web of Support, by Isabel B. Abella & Ilinca Vladescu.
Published as cover art in *Academic Medicine*, May 2009.



Course structure for the first year