A Message from our CHeEtAH Director, Gretchen A. Case, PhD, MA

This first year of our existence as the Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities (CHeEtAH) has brought not only transitions and challenges but also opportunities to expand on the important work our group has been doing for more than three decades. We are announcing new initiatives to include even more of you across and beyond the U’s campus in our programming. One event we are happy to see return after a “pandemic pause” highlights our commitment to arts in health.

Since 2015, we have been proud to collaborate with Utah Presents, the University of Utah’s performing arts presenter, bringing to campus artists who explore ethics, health, and the human condition. We are delighted to return to this tradition of live performances on Thursday, March 24, at 7PM in Kingsbury Hall. This year marks the third year that CHeEtAH, along with Utah Presents and the UHealth Resiliency Center, will co-produce an evening of short true, personal stories told by our community. The 2022 installment of “Healthcare Stories” will focus on experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic told in less than ten minutes from six different perspectives. Storytelling is one of many ways to make meaning out of overwhelming events like those of the past two years; listening to others tell stories invites reflection on individual and shared experiences.

We will audio-record this live event for limited listening at a later date but hope that many of you can join us in Kingsbury Hall, which is large enough that audience members can spread out for comfort and safety. Ticket information is here. CME is available.

Introducing Activities of the New Initiative in Narrative, Medicine, Health and Writing

Two conferences this spring are helping draw attention to the Initiative in Narrative, Medicine, Health, and Writing, a new program launched in January as part of the Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities. Each conference is free and open to U of U health sciences faculty, staff, and students, as well as community partners.

The Narrative Networking Conference, set Friday, April 22, will feature faculty from across the health sciences who use narrative in their research, education, and clinical practice. From 12-3 p.m. at the University Guest House, faculty, staff, and students will meet informally to learn about projects, ranging from narratives of spinal-cord injury patients undergoing occupational therapy to 55-word stories published in Voices from the Residents to the complication of narratives through spiritual interventions that allow for questioning belief systems and cultural expectations.

Networking is intended to encourage future collaborations among the Colleges of Dentistry, Health, Nursing, and Pharmacy, School of Medicine, Eccles Health Sciences Library, and University Health. The conference is sponsored by the Initiative in Narrative, Medicine, Health, and Writing, directed by Susan J. Sample, PhD, MFA, core faculty at CHeEtAH.

The Symposium on Underserved, Rural, and Global Health Education (SURGE) will run Thursday through Saturday, April 28-30, at the health sciences center. The theme for 2022 SURGE is “Listen for the Story: Using Narrative to Enhance Clinical Care in Underserved, Rural, and Global Health.” The keynote speaker will be Deepitham Gowda, MD, MPH, MS, assistant dean for medical education at the Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine in Pasadena, CA. Dr. Gowda is recognized

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Evening Ethics Discussions

These informal, multidisciplinary discussions about current issues in health ethics take place approximately bi-monthly or as ethical issues arise. A CHeEtAH faculty member facilitates discussion. Guided by the topic, we invite people with relevant expertise and experience and informed opinions to join us. Generally about 15-60 people from a variety of disciplines, including healthcare, public policy, philosophy, law, and business attend. We distribute short, timely articles from the nation’s most thoughtful newspapers, journals, blogs, and magazines to the group in advance of our discussions. CME is offered.

UtahPresents: Healthcare Stories
Thursday, March 24, 2022
7 pm
Kingsbury Hall
CME offered:
Event Code: 83019

Our healthcare-themed storytelling event returns, featuring stories from the age of COVID, told by healthcare workers and community members whose lives were impacted by this once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. This live performance event requires tickets.

This is a UtahPresents event that is co-sponsored with the Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities and the University of Utah Health’s Resiliency Center.

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as a national leader in the clinical application of narrative medicine.

SURGE 2020 is sponsored by: the Global, Rural, and Underserved Child Health (GRUCH) Certificate Program; Internal Medicine/Pediatrics Residency Rural Pathway; Resident Engagement & Training for Underserved and Rural Needs (RETURN), and CHeEtAH. More information and registration is available online at bit.ly/surgeutah.

One of the goals of the Initiative in Narrative, Medicine, Health, and Writing is to further understanding of narrative in the context of health care. Narratives can be broadly divided into three areas. Illness narratives are created by patients who use narrative to reconstruct new identities, incorporating their changed/diseased bodies into the stories of their lives that illness has disrupted. Narratives about illness are used primarily by medical and healthcare professionals and trainees to communicate clinical knowledge. They range in style and genre from patient charts and case presentations to anecdotes, stories of unusual clinical encounters, and provider memoirs. They are told from a medical point of view and interpret patients’ illnesses in terms of pathological and physiological signs and symptoms. Narrative as a clinical tool refers to ways in which physicians and health professionals take into consideration patients’ narratives when clinically assessing them. Rita Charon, MD, physician and literary scholar at Columbia University, refers to this approach as “narrative medicine.”
The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution by Jonathan Eig offers nuanced insight into the political, scientific, religious, historical, and personality considerations at play in the development of the birth control pill. In our present moment, the top courts in the United States are routinely called to rule on the constitutionality of proposed restrictions to reproductive healthcare—including access to birth control medications. As anyone with an eye for these stories knows, headlines related to women’s reproductive freedom are standard fare in any news cycle—a fact that reiterates the constancy of our cultural conversations about women’s ability to control their own bodies and health.

With the persistence of reproductive health in the news, Jonathan Eig’s energetic journalistic style is welcome in this text as we ask ourselves what we can learn from the formative stages of reproductive health policy and research in the United States. By documenting the pill’s arguably perilous creation story, Eig conveys the complexity of conversations about gender, physical autonomy, belief, science, bias, money, and love that led to the pill’s development and are necessary reading for our ongoing quest to ensure continued access to the pill today.

Maggie O’Farrell’s Hamnet: A Novel of the Plague, was published in 2020. It’s set in late Elizabethan England, and it offers O’Farrell’s imaginative representation of William Shakespeare’s family. Shakespeare and his wife Anne Hathaway lost their child Hamnet, probably to the plague, in 1596. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet in 1600. O’Farrell tells her story from Anne’s perspective—“Agnes” as she calls her—and the novel is a meticulous evocation of rural English life at the end of the 16th century. It’s also a deep meditation on a marriage, on the death of a child, and on grief and art. We look forward to hearing your responses to this well-received historical novel, and we can think together about why it has proved so popular and moving to readers in our own time.

The Genome Defense: Inside the Epic Legal Battle to Determine Who Owns Your DNA by Jorge Contreras, JD

The Genome Defense: Inside the Epic Legal Battle to Determine Who Owns Your DNA by University of Utah faculty Jorge Contreras narrates the lawsuit that reverberated throughout the biotechnology industry. At the center of this story is Myriad Genetics, a company that originated at the University of Utah and eventually controlled the patents on the BRCA1/2 genes. The US Supreme Court ruling in 2013 on this case changed patent law and the way that DNA is treated in the legal system. The Genome Defense tells a story that started in Utah but had effects on biomedical research and treatment far beyond our state.
Internal Medicine Grand Rounds: Reckoning with the History of Eugenic Sterilization in Utah

James Tabery, PhD, MA and Nicole L. Novak, PhD, MSc presented Internal Medicine Grand Rounds on February 3, 2022: “Reckoning with the History of Eugenic Sterilization in Utah”

Archived recording: https://medicine.utah.edu/internalmedicine/grand-rounds/video.php?video=1_xhq6eudr

Between 1925 and 1974, approximately 900 people in Utah were subjected to state-sanctioned eugenic sterilization because they were deemed unfit to have children. We have conducted a deidentified demographic analysis of the victims (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, age at sterilization), which allows for better understanding of who was targeted with the procedure and how that changed over time in response to institutional, state, and national trends. Utah was among the last states in the nation to continue this practice of institutional sterilization, fueling rumors of sterilization survivors. Our demographic analysis permits estimating the number of victims who are still alive.

Jim Tabery, PhD, MA
Nicole L. Novak, PhD, MSc

CheEiAH Calendar of Events

*Literature and Health Care Discussion Group 6-7:30 pm (via zoom)

The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution by Jonathan Eig, Facilitated by Hailey Haffey, PhD https://utah.zoom.us/j/99691395156 Passcode: 477621

Hamnet: A Novel of the Plague by Maggie O’Farrell, Facilitated by Mark Matheson, DPhil https://utah.zoom.us/j/92156629051 Passcode: 022702

The Genome Defense: Inside the Epic Legal Battle to Determine Who Owns Your DNA by Jorge Contreras, Facilitated by Gretchen Case, PhD https://utah.zoom.us/j/95687702142 Passcode: 350553

*Evening Ethics

“UtahPresents: Health Stories”, 7pm (live performance), Kingsbury Hall

Thurs. Mar. 24

Conferences

The Narrative Networking Conference, University Guesthouse, 12-3pm

Fri. Apr. 22

April 28-30

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Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities

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Erin Rothwell, PhD
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Jill Sweeney, MD
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CHeEtAH Core Faculty on the Road and In Print

Susan Sample will read from her poetry at The King’s English Bookshop April 2 as part of the Utah Poetry Festival. She will join two other poets whose work represents indie-press and chapbook publications. The 4-5 p.m. reading is open to the public.

Jim Ruble discusses issues around lethal injection for execution. Article here.

Brent Kious and Peggy Battin will present a paper at the World Congress of Bioethics in Basel, Switzerland, July 2022, titled “Harm, Offense, and Judging Lives”.


Peggy Battin is an invited speaker for the American Occupational Health Conference (AOHC 2022), taking place May 1-4, 2022 in Salt Lake City. The topic is “The Occupational and Environmental Medicine Physician During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges of Caring for Those Who Care.”