

# BIOETHICS & HUMANITIES NEWSLETTER



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## WELCOME...

*Welcome* to the monthly Bioethics and Humanities Newsletter provided by the Program in Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine.

### **Program in Bioethics and Humanities:** *Our Mission*

We are committed to helping healthcare professionals explore and understand the increasingly complex ethical questions that have been brought on by advances in medical technology and the health care system. We achieve this through education, research, and service within the Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa Health Care, University of Iowa, and the wider Iowa community.

[More Details About  
The Program](#)

# ETHICS IN HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE

**IOWA**

Carver College  
of Medicine

Friday, May 30, 2025 | 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Medical Education Research Facility (MERF)  
Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa



## SESSION ONE

*Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (EAS) Policies Around the World:  
Ethical, Legal, and Clinical Considerations*

Scott Kim, MD, PhD

## SESSION TWO

*Workplace Culture and the Ethics of Interpersonal Interactions*

Erica Carlisle, MD

## SESSION THREE

*Ethics and Artificial Intelligence in Health Care: Our Choices and Our Selves*

Matthew DeCamp, MD, PhD

## SESSION FOUR

*Should We Sometimes Try to Change a Patient's Mind? Examining the  
Ethics of Persuasion in Shared Decision Making in Healthcare*

Lauris Kaldjian, MD, PhD

### Intended Audience:

Administrators, Advanced Practice Providers, Attorneys, Chaplains,  
Nurses, Physicians, Social Workers, Students, Trainees, and Others

**Note: Due to the number of registrations already received, we regret  
to say that we are no longer able to accept additional participants.**

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## INAUGURAL MIDWEST PHYSICIAN WRITERS RETREAT UNITES AND INSPIRES PHYSICIAN WRITERS ACROSS THE REGION



Dr. Elizabeth Fleming shares opening remarks at the inaugural retreat

The inaugural Midwest Physician Writers Retreat took place from April 25-27, 2025 in Madison, Wisconsin. This conference provided an opportunity for medical students, residents, fellows, and faculty physicians with an interest and passion for creative writing to carve out intentionally structured time to write and receive feedback.

Over 55 medical students and physicians were in attendance at the conference, which kicked off on Friday evening with a welcome social at Lake City Books in Madison. The social event featured a reading by Dr. Bruce Campbell from his book of essays, *A Fullness of Uncertain Significance*.

Multiple small group breakout sessions were offered throughout the weekend with an emphasis on generating new work. Sessions included topics such as discovering surprising gifts from your past, showing not telling, writing from multiple perspectives, and creating meaningful narrative medicine sessions. Small group sessions were led by leaders in the field of medical humanities from institutions including University of Wisconsin, University of Iowa, University of Minnesota, Advocate Health, and Medical College of Wisconsin.



Attendees write and share with each other during a dynamic small group session

In an inspirational plenary session on Saturday afternoon, Dr. Bruce Campbell shared insights from his career, writing life, and his own healthcare journey. Dr. Carol Scott-Conner led an informative seminar on publishing, offering practical tips on publishing creative work related to healthcare. After a productive and inspiring day, attendees decompressed with an Open Mic reading at Delta Beer lab in Madison on Saturday night. On Sunday, in addition to breakout sessions, attendees were offered the opportunity to participate in small group writing workshops for constructive feedback.

The writers retreat focused on opportunities to generate creative work for future publication and offered ample time for reflection, with the opportunity to connect with others about the purpose and meaning of doctoring. It also cultivated a growing community of physician and medical student writers, fostering the formation of new friendships and connections.



Conference participants share writing with each other at a lively Open Mic



# HUMANITIES CORNER



This month's spotlight is on **Hunter Twedt, a fourth year medical student**. His creative work is a written reflection. He completed this creative work as part of the *Ethics and Humanities Sub-Internship Seminar*. During this Seminar students are asked to complete a written reflection or creative work that responds to a situation they encountered during their sub-internship that illustrated values in ethics, professionalism, or humanism.

## About The Human Condition

The pen trembles in her hand as she tries to write. It's a simple thing, putting words on paper, but today it feels like climbing a mountain. She stares at the blank page, at the lines waiting to be filled, but her mind is as empty as the paper before her. She's not sure what to say, how to explain what she's feeling. How do you write a letter from a place like this?

The room is quiet, save for the distant hum of machines and the occasional soft footfalls of the nurses. She's been here for days, weeks, maybe longer—time blurs in the hospital, loses its meaning. She only knows that she's tired, so tired, and the words won't come.

She closes her eyes, and in the darkness behind her lids, memories flicker like old film. She sees herself as a child, running through the fields near her home, the sun warm on her back, the wind in her hair. She sees her mother's face, smiling, calling her in for dinner. She sees the faces of friends, of family, of the people she loves, and each image is a stab to her heart.

They don't know. They don't understand what it's like to be here, in this place where hope is measured out in milligrams and milliliters. They don't know what it's like to feel your body betray you, to feel the life you've built slip through your fingers like sand. She wants to tell them, to explain, but how can she? How can she put into words the fear, the pain, the anger?

She picks up the pen again, determined to write something, anything. The words come slowly, haltingly, as if they're being pulled from the depths of her soul. She writes about the hospital, about the way the light falls in the morning, casting long shadows across the floor. She writes about the doctors, the nurses, the way they speak in calm, measured tones, as if their voices could somehow make everything better.

And then she pauses, the pen hovering over the paper as she thinks about the people who keep her going. The good days, when they come, are often because of someone else. There's the doctor with

# HUMANITIES CORNER (CONTINUED)

the kind eyes, who takes the time to sit by her bed and explain things in a way she can understand. He doesn't rush, doesn't speak in the clipped, hurried tone of someone with a thousand other patients to see. Instead, he listens. Really listens. He answers her questions, no matter how small or repetitive, and when he leaves, she feels a little less like she's drowning. His words are like a life raft, something to cling to in the vast ocean of uncertainty that surrounds her.

She writes about him, about how much it means to have someone who treats her like a person, not just a case. She writes about how his visits, brief as they are, make the days more bearable. It's strange, she thinks, how much power a few minutes of genuine attention can have. She thinks about how he embodies a true sense of professionalism, not just in his knowledge and skill but in his dedication to her as a whole person, respecting her dignity and understanding the humanistic aspects of her care. His compassion feels like a bridge between the science of medicine and the art of healing, something she never fully appreciated until now. It makes her wonder about the other patients, the ones who don't have a doctor like hers, who are left to navigate this labyrinth of illness and recovery without a guide. How much lonelier must their nights be? How much darker their thoughts?

And then there are the nurses. Oh, the nurses. She writes about them, too, because they deserve it. They're the ones who see her at her worst, who clean up the messes her body makes, who bring her medication with a smile even when she knows they're exhausted. There's one nurse in particular, a young woman with a warm laugh and a gentle touch, who has made all the difference. She doesn't just do her job; she brings light into the room with her. She talks to her, asks her about her life before all this, and it feels like a gift. In those moments, she's not just a patient. She's a person again.

She writes about how this nurse takes the time to adjust her pillows, to make sure she's comfortable, to bring her an extra blanket when the nights get cold. It's these small acts of kindness that make the endless hours pass a little quicker. When she's too weak to hold a spoon, the nurse feeds her, talking softly the whole time, making the simple act of eating feel like a connection to the world outside. She writes about how grateful she is for that kindness, how it's the thread she holds onto when the days blur into one another and the pain is too much to bear. This nurse represents the humanism that feels so essential in the face of suffering. She demonstrates that healthcare isn't just about treatments and protocols but about relationships and empathy—about seeing the person beneath the illness and responding with genuine care.

The pen moves more easily now, as if the act of writing about these people has loosened something inside her. She thinks about the phone calls, the ones from family and friends who are too far away to visit. How the sound of their voices is like a balm to her spirit. Even when they talk about mundane things—what they had for dinner, the latest gossip, the weather—it reminds her that life goes on

# HUMANITIES CORNER (CONTINUED)

outside these walls. She's not forgotten. She's still a part of something larger, even if it feels distant and unreachable.

She writes about the moments when someone actually visits, about how the presence of another person in the room changes everything. The hospital is a place of solitude, despite being full of people. The isolation is thick, suffocating at times, and a visit from someone she loves cuts through it like a knife. When they walk through the door, the grayness lifts, just for a while, and she can breathe again. It's not the conversations that matter—they often struggle to find words in the face of what's happening—but the simple fact that they are there, sitting beside her, holding her hand.

She writes about the way they look at her, with concern, yes, but also with love. It's that love that keeps her going, that makes her fight when she feels like giving up. It's easy to forget, lying in this bed, connected to machines, that she is loved. The hospital can make you feel like a burden, like your existence is reduced to what's wrong with you, rather than what's right. But when they visit, she remembers. She remembers who she is, who she was, and who she still hopes to be.

And as she writes, the tears come, hot and unbidden, spilling onto the page and smudging the ink.

When she's finished, she folds the letter and places it on the bedside table. It's not perfect, it's not what she wanted to say, but it's the best she can do. She hopes that one day, someone will read it and understand. Understand that she tried, that she fought, that she loved with everything she had. She lies back against the pillows, exhausted but relieved. The letter is done, and with it, she feels a weight lift from her chest. She closes her eyes, and for the first time in a long time, she sleeps without dreams.

And in the morning, when the nurse finds the letter, she will place it in a drawer with the others, a collection of words that will never be sent, but that hold within them all the hope, fear, and love of the people who wrote them.

A testament to the human condition, to the struggle, to the small victories that keep us going, even in the darkest of times. A reflection of the enduring principles of medical professionalism and humanism—the commitment to care, the respect for dignity, and the understanding that every interaction, no matter how brief, has the power to heal.

# BIOETHICS IN THE LITERATURE

- ⇒ Allyse M, Riggan K, Bonhomme N, et al. Rethinking the burden of traditional informed consent prior to prenatal genetic screening. [Hastings Cent Rep](#). 2025; 55: 29-38.
- ⇒ Alotaibi H. A historical review on the Andalusian physicians and the treatment of mental health. [J Bioeth Inq](#). 2025 Apr 25. [Epub ahead of print]
- ⇒ Barnes C, Aboy MR, Minssen T, et al. Enabling demonstrated consent for biobanking with blockchain and generative AI. [Am J Bioeth](#). 2025; 25: 96-111.
- ⇒ Clapp JT, Kruser JM, Schwarze ML, et al. Language in bioethics: Beyond the representational view. [Am J Bioeth](#). 2025; 25: 41-53.
- ⇒ Jameel SY. A critical interpretive literature review of phronesis in medicine. [J Med Philos](#). 2025; 50: 117-132.
- ⇒ Jotterand F, Derse A, Spellecy R, et al. Practical wisdom, clinical judgments, and the agential view. [J Med Philos](#). 2025; 50: 147-158.
- ⇒ Jotterand F, Kim DT. The new science of practical wisdom: A critical appraisal. [J Med Philos](#). 2025; 50: 75-79.
- ⇒ Kanter J, Gaynor M. The rise of health care platforms. [JAMA](#). 2025 Apr 9. [Epub ahead of print].

***“... a smaller number of massive health care conglomerate platforms exhibit many of the same concerning characteristics as big tech platforms and that similar antitrust attention and action may be necessary..”***

(Kanter and Gaynor)

- ⇒ Kassirer JP. Artificial intelligence in medical practice: Is it ready? [Ann Intern Med](#). 2025; 178: 596-597.

***“Medicine is not the only field wrestling with how to implement AI in its quotidian activities, but it is one of the disciplines where the consequences include life, quality of life, and death. Thus, the technology must be rigorously examined. I leave it to deep thinkers to predict whether AI will replace physicians and to philosophers to debate the existential concern that AI will enslave or destroy humanity. However, physicians must apply AI tools with sufficient comprehension and discerning clinical judgment.”***

(Kassirer)

- ⇒ Keon-Cohen Z, Loane H, Romero L, et al. Advance care planning and goals of care discussions in perioperative care: A scoping review. [Br J Anaesth](#). 2025; 134: 1318-1332.

# BIOETHICS IN THE LITERATURE (CONTINUED)

- ⇒ Maddox TM, Embí P, Gerhart J, et al. Generative ai in medicine - evaluating progress and challenges. [N Engl J Med](#). 2025 Apr 10. [Epub ahead of print].
- ⇒ Madni A, Levine DR, Sawyer KE, et al. Impacts of ethical dilemmas and moral distress in pediatric hematology oncology nurses. [Pediatr Blood Cancer](#). 2025; 72: e31546.
- ⇒ Meredyth N, Liu Y, Haddad D, et al. Recognizing the need for goals of care conversations among critically ill surgical patients. [J Surg Res](#). 2025; 306: 554-560.
- ⇒ Meyer JJ. The intent of the physician's order for life-sustaining treatment: Reflecting patient wishes and institutional obligations. [J Hosp Palliat Nurs](#). 2025; 27: E92-e96.
- ⇒ Meyer LE, DeMartino ES, Williams C. Financial toxicity in early phase oncology clinical trials: A review and ethical analysis. [Ethics Hum Res](#). 2025; 47: 26-33.
- ⇒ Miller CB. Challenges facing the appeal to practical wisdom in medicine and beyond. [J Med Philos](#). 2025; 50: 93-103.
- ⇒ Moore B. Seeing and having seen: On suffering and intersubjectivity. [Camb Q Healthc Ethics](#). 2025 Feb 10. [Epub ahead of print].
- ⇒ Nagam VM, Sineri CF, Pyo RT. Representing the unrepresented: Providing medical care for the unrepresented patient. [J Clin Ethics](#). 2025; 36: 92-96.
- ⇒ Paasche-Orlow MK, Wolf MS. Addressing health literacy. [JAMA](#). 2025 Apr 9. [Epub ahead of print].
- ⇒ Rosa Ramos JG, Vasconcelos C, Dadalto L. Practical approaches to the tasks of preserving autonomy and respecting vulnerability among critically ill adult patients: A narrative review. [Crit Care Sci](#). 2025; 37: e20250234.
- ⇒ Sursely AM, Kazmerzak D, Appelgate W, et al. "I feel like my job is to give patients hope" - perspectives of community health workers and employers in Iowa: A mixed methods study. [BMC Health Serv Res](#). 2025; 25: 386.
- ⇒ Taylor LJ, Rivet EB, Kapadia MR. Communicating with patients about surgery. [JAMA](#). 2025 Apr 16. [Epub ahead of print].
- ⇒ Zeltzer D, Kugler Z, Hayat L, et al. Comparison of initial artificial intelligence (ai) and final physician recommendations in ai-assisted virtual urgent care visits. [Ann Intern Med](#). 2025; 178: 498-506.





# BIOETHICS IN THE NEWS

- ⇒ Nurse-scientists shouldn't have to choose between research and caring for patients. [STAT News](#), April 28, 2025.
- ⇒ With paramedics spread thin, Honolulu dusts off a possible solution. [Associated Press](#), April 24, 2025.
- ⇒ DOJ will investigate doctors who provide trans care to minors, attorney general says. [NBC News](#), April 24, 2025.
- ⇒ My son has a rare syndrome. So I turned to the internet. [The New York Times Magazine](#), April 22, 2025.
- ⇒ Ex-Harvard medical school morgue chief to plead guilty in sale of body parts. [The New York Times](#), April 18, 2025.
- ⇒ Behind the story of the decades-long journey of xenotransplantation. [Associated Press](#), April 17, 2025.
- ⇒ Global pandemic treaty finalized, without U.S., in 'a victory for multilateralism.' [Science](#), April 16, 2025.
- ⇒ First UK birth after womb transplant is a medical breakthrough—but raises important ethical questions. [The Conversation](#), April 15, 2025.
- ⇒ Haunted by hopelessness: 12 Zambians share their stories as HIV drugs run out. [NPR](#), April 14, 2025.
- ⇒ Lawsuit alleging Alabama officials illegally harvested inmates' organs can proceed, judge rules. [Associated Press](#), April 11, 2025.
- ⇒ White House orders NIH to research trans 'regret' and 'detransition.' [NPR](#), April 11, 2025.
- ⇒ AI scribe technology lets me focus on my patients, not a screen. [STAT News](#), April 9, 2025.
- ⇒ Why AI therapists could further isolate vulnerable patients instead of easing suffering. [The Conversation](#), April 2, 2025.
- ⇒ Every doctor is a writer: On the end of note-writing and meaning-making in medicine. [STAT News](#), April 2, 2025.
- ⇒ How much will that surgery cost? Hospital price lists remain largely unhelpful. [NPR](#), March 31, 2025.
- ⇒ This is the embryo that became my daughter, [The New York Times](#), March 25, 2025.



# BIOETHICS OPPORTUNITIES

## UPCOMING

- ⇒ [Wide Lens: Listening](#) (Thursday, May 8, 2025, 5:30pm at the Herald Stark Opera Studio, Voxman Music Building): This Wide Lens event brings together researchers from science, social sciences, the humanities, and the arts to investigate what it means to listen deeply and thoughtfully. Free and open to all.

## ONGOING

- ⇒ American Journal of Bioethics: [YouTube channel](#) containing previous webinars
- ⇒ Children's Mercy Kansas City: [Pediatric Ethics Podcast series](#)
- ⇒ Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences: [Events](#)
- ⇒ The Hastings Center: [Webinars](#) and [Events](#)
- ⇒ [Health Ethics](#) podcast with host Bryan Pilkington, PhD (Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine): Find on Google Podcasts, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Audible.
- ⇒ The MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics: [YouTube channel](#) containing previous lectures
- ⇒ Michigan State University Center for Bioethics and Social Justice: [Recorded Webinars](#)
- ⇒ Office for Human Research Protections [Luminaries Lecture Series](#)
- ⇒ University of Minnesota Center for Bioethics: [Events](#)

# BIOETHICS SERVICES AT THE UIHC

## ETHICS CONSULT SERVICE

This service is a clinical resource for UI Health Care personnel who would like help addressing an ethical question or problem related to a patient's care. Consults can be ordered through EPIC or by paging the ethics consultant on call. For more information, [click here](#).



## CLINICAL RESEARCH ETHICS SERVICE

We provide free consultation on ethical issues related to research design, tissue banking, genetic research results, informed consent, and working with vulnerable patient populations. In particular, we assist clinical investigators in identifying and addressing the ethical challenges that frequently arise when designing or conducting research with human subjects. These include ethical challenges in sampling design; randomized and placebo-controlled studies; participant recruitment and informed consent; return of individual-level research results; community engagement processes; and more. For more information, [click here](#).