

Beyond Medical Histories: Gaining Insight from Patient Stories

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Learn how healthcare providers can better understand and care for patients by applying creativity and storytelling to their clinical practices.

<https://www.edx.org/course/beyond-medical-histories-gaining-insight-from-pati>

About this course

Physicians and healthcare providers are fundamentally professional story-listeners, story-shapers, and story-responders. This shouldn't come as a surprise; people have always related to each other and the world through the telling, listening, and interpreting of stories.

But increasingly complex health problems, compounded by social factors and other burdens, make for increasingly complex stories. Healthcare professionals make decisions, including the appropriate use of technology, based on the stories patients share. Yet, storytelling and listening are skills that are often largely omitted from the training of healthcare professionals.

Healthcare providers must think more creatively, more like creative writers. In the narrative disaster zone of the emergency department, patients' stories often feel like first drafts, and first drafts—for most of us—can be raw and messy.

Expertise with stories is a low-tech skill that's fundamental to connection, communication, curiosity, and problem-solving. It's a clinical ability with multiple potential benefits, ranging from making us more mindful of our thinking to improving patient engagement. Aptitude with stories can both expand our tolerance for uncertainty and reduce risk.

We'll focus on stories - challenging stories, We'll discuss why healthcare providers must think more creatively even in a field that prides itself on scientific evidence. Making the right diagnosis critically important, but so is learning how to ask the right questions, developing comfort with uncertainty, and working within constraints. In order to treat patients effectively, we must do everything in our power to ensure that the story we are hearing is the one our patients are trying to tell.

What you'll learn

- How to apply story anatomy to stories patients tell in clinical medicine
- Tools for gaining traction in difficult stories and responding to them
- Many ways in which stories can unconsciously influence decisions
- How we embrace uncertainty and mystery as opportunities for deeper inquiry

- How story-making skills can build empathy and insight into others.