

# Henry and Sylvia WONG FORUM IN MEDICINE

The Henry and Sylvia WONG FORUM IN MEDICINE for the advancement of research and public education was established by the Wongs, who are both McMaster Alumni.



2nd Annual DAY in FACULTY DEVELOPMENT 2009

## A Health Care Transformed by Stories: Narrative Medicine for Clinicians and Patients

### Wednesday, April 29, 2009

4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. *(please be on time)*

**MDCL - 3020**

*(Michael G. DeGroot Centre for Learning & Discovery, McMaster University)*

**Reception to follow, outside MDCL - 3020 – All Welcome**

#### Abstract

Narrative Medicine is a clinical practice fortified by the knowledge of what to do with stories. All of us nurses, therapists, doctors, social workers, chaplains enter the lives of our patients in times of great disruption. The narrative thread of an ordinary life is interrupted by illness or even the threat of illness. A child gets leukemia, a senior breaks her hip, an adolescent girl gets pregnant, a grandmother loses her mind, a young mother finds a breast lump, an infant is born with a damaged heart. We clinicians enter these complex narrative situations having to imagine what the situation must be like from the inside and having to imagine alternative futures for these patients and their families. The better we can attend to the complexities and the better we can lend ourselves as narrators for patients of what they are enduring, the better we can accompany them through their illness, both bearing witness to their suffering and offering the best possible technical care for their ailments. We are learning about powerful methods that increase the narrative competence of all health care professionals, enabling them to honor their patients' stories of illness and to provide singular and effective health care. As a dividend, narrative medicine also nourishes individual health care professionals and strengthens the team-work upon which we always rely.

#### Objectives

1. Learners will understand the precepts of narrative medicine training in health care settings
2. Learners will experience the discovery potential of reflective narrative writing about clinical practice
3. Learners will hear about opportunities to fortify ordinary clinical practice with innovative narrative techniques of care



#### Guest Speaker

**Rita Charon, M.D., Ph.D.**

*Professor of Clinical Medicine and  
Director of the Program in Narrative Medicine at  
Columbia University, New York, NY, USA*

Dr. Charon is a general internist in practice in New York City and a literary scholar specializing in the works of Henry James. She founded and directs the Program in Narrative Medicine, overseeing a widespread effort in education, scholarship, and research in the dividends of narrative skills for health care. Dr. Charon is author of *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* and co-editor of *Psychoanalysis and Narrative Medicine* and *Stories Matter: The Role of Narrative in Medical Ethics*. She and her Core Faculty at Columbia offer intensive training in narrative medicine for health care professionals and trainees, including a new Master of Science in Narrative Medicine degree program.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** McMASTER UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES  
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