

THE PATIENT AS “PERSON” HISTORY

Patients have stories that they tell themselves. In treating them, it is usually quite helpful to learn their story or narrative. In the narrative ethics approach, the following questions can be very helpful to learn what patients believe about their illness, what caused it and how it has affected them, how they want it to be treated, how it has affected their relationships, and what resources they are using to persevere despite their illness.

1. As you understand it, what is your medical problem?
2. How serious is your illness? What will happen if you are not treated?
3. What do you think caused your illness, and why did it start when it did?
4. Why are you being tested and treated as you are? Are there other choices for treatment beside the one you are receiving?
5. How has your illness affected you?
6. What is most important to you in receiving treatment for your illness?
7. What would you want to avoid in the treatment of your illness?
8. What is your understanding of the meaning of your illness? Is God or religion important to you as you face your illness?
9. What are your sources of strength? What role does faith play in your life?
10. How does faith influence your thinking about your illness?
11. Are there religious practices that are particularly meaningful to you?
12. Are there issues in your spiritual life that are troubling you now?
13. Would you like to talk with someone about these issues?
14. Help me understand how you see your family (and/or other significant social relationship)? What are your thoughts about their concerns or your concerns about them?