



4th Annual Conference
Finding Our Voices:
Humanities in Medicine

Saturday, September 26, 2026

The HUB for Clinical Collaboration on the CHOP Philadelphia Campus

Course Overview

This conference will bring together a community of those who are involved in healthcare to build connection through the humanities. Participants will learn to use narrative and visual art skills, reflective writing, storytelling, guided observation, and interpretive practices to give voice to their experiences in healthcare and enhance meaning in their work.

Course Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Use narrative skills to voice personal and professional experiences in healthcare
- Develop empathetic skills through radical listening and art observation
- Use creativity to improve functioning of multidisciplinary teams and provide humanistic care

General Information and Registration Fees

This in-person conference related to humanities will be held Saturday September 26, 2026, in the Hub for Collaboration. The registration table will be open at 8 a.m. on September 26. The registration fee includes continental breakfast, lunch, program materials and parking.

Physicians: \$150

Non-Physicians: \$75

Trainees and Students: \$25

Social Work Continuing Education Credit Statement

CHOP is a pre-approved provider of continuing education credits for Pennsylvania Licensed Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Professional Counselors. Participants licensed in Pennsylvania who attend the full workshop and complete the required evaluation are eligible for 6 Continuing Education Credits. Participants licensed in other states should check with local licensing boards to determine continuing education approval.

Accreditation



JOINTLY ACCREDITED PROVIDER™
INTERPROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

In support of improving patient care, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

Designation of Credit

Physicians: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia designates this live activity for a maximum of 5.25 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Nurses: This program provides 5.25 ANCC hours.

Social Workers:



As a Jointly Accredited Organization, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved under this program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. Social workers completing this course receive 5.25 ASWB ACE General continuing education credits.

Services for People With Disabilities

If special arrangements are required for an individual with a disability to attend this meeting, please contact the Continuing Medical Education Department at 215-590-5263.

Hotel Accommodations

A block of rooms with reduced rates has been reserved at The Study at University City, 20 S 33rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. The group rates are \$279 single and double occupancy, plus a 16.37% percent state and local taxes. Participants are required to make their own reservations by calling The Study directly at 215-387-1400. Please mention the CHOP Humanities Conference. The special room rate will be available until September 4, 2026. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space and rate availability basis.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia reserves the right to cancel or postpone any course due to any unforeseen circumstances. In the event of cancellation or postponement, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is not responsible for any related costs, charges, or expenses to participants, including cancellation charges assessed by airlines/travel agencies. In order to process refunds for in-person course withdrawals, cancellation must be received in writing at CMEOFFICE@chop.edu by September 10, 2026. Refunds will be issued for registration minus \$25 administrative fee. No refunds will be issued thereafter.

PROGRAM

4th Annual Finding Our Voices: Humanities in Medicine

Saturday, September 26, 2026

8:00 a.m. Breakfast/Registration

8:30 a.m. Welcome/Introductions and Program Overview

Madhura Pradhan

8:45 a.m. Keynote Address

When Words Fail: How Learning to Listen Differently Freed Me to Speak

Nicki Pombier

9:45 a.m. **Storied Bodies: The Role of Language in the Construction of Medical Meaning**

Moderated by Neha Mani and Tova Tachau

Join the co-chairs of the Perelman School of Medicine Medical Humanities Council for an engaging discussion exploring how language, translation, and narrative intersect in medical practice in conversation with Dr. Elaine Scarry, Professor of English at Harvard, Dr. Elena Fratto, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton, and Dr. Rebecca Mueller, Professor of Medicine in Translational Medicine and Human Genetics at Penn. The discussion will explore how patient symptoms are translated into the medical language of diagnostic signs, the crucial role of prognostic language in shaping how patients imagine their futures and experience their present, the ways in which pain defies the language used to express it, and how medical practice is fundamentally shaped by narrative structures.

10:45 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. Breakout Sessions I

A Designing Inclusive Spaces

Meggie Crnic and Eron Friedlaender

Environments—built and natural—shape our health, well-being, and opportunities. While design is typically guided by function, aesthetics, safety, and cost, this session explores the importance of centering populations often overlooked in design processes. Using autism as a key lens, presenters will share examples of how architectural and community spaces can support or hinder participation and accessibility. Through visuals, narratives, and discussion, participants will examine how wayfinding, acoustics, lighting, spatial layout, and visual cues influence experiences in healthcare and community settings. The session challenges conventional assumptions about “supportive” design and explores more inclusive, flexible approaches that reflect the diversity of human experience. Participants will engage in guided reflection aimed at reimagining personal and professional spaces through an ethically informed, inclusive design perspective.

B **Listening Beyond Words: Oral History as a Creative Practice** *Nicki Pombier*

This session introduces oral history as a practice of deep, creative listening — one that extends beyond speech to include gesture, silence, sensory experiences, and presence. Drawing on oral history and humanities-based approaches, we will explore listening as a form of attention and relationship: a way of being with another person's experience without rushing to interpret or resolve it, allowing for complexity, for moments of connection and uncertainty. Participants will engage in simple, guided exercises to practice listening beyond spoken language, attend to how meaning is expressed through the body and environment, and reflect on their own practices of attention. No prior experience is required. Participants will experiment with practical, adaptable tools for listening more fully—to others and to themselves—in both clinical and creative contexts.

C **Learning from Stories that Take a Long Time to Listen To** *Dorene Balmer and May Shum*

Stories told by clinicians from the beginning of training through the onset of clinical practice offer a unique window into the personal and professional transformations involved in becoming a healthcare provider. Such narratives require time and sustained attention, but they illustrate the deep humanity of training in healthcare. Unlike memoirs written in hindsight, longitudinal narratives unfold gradually and in real time. In this session, participants will use the framework of longitudinal narratives to reflect upon their own trajectories. Through guided writing and optional sharing, participants will explore their own unfolding stories. The session will foster discussion around how sustained reflection can support personal and professional development and will highlight the shared human dimensions of growth across disciplines.

D **Enhancing Observation Skills Through the Use of Original Works of Art** *Linda Friedlaender*

Healthcare education often emphasizes interpretation and pattern recognition while underemphasizing the foundational skill of careful visual observation which is key to clinical diagnosis. This workshop explores the use of original works of art to strengthen observational skills. Participants engage with representational and narrative paintings, practicing structured observation before interpretation. Through guided exercises, they describe visual details precisely, defer immediate judgment, and use evidence-based description, linking this process to clinical reasoning and diagnosis. Participants will gain practice in using visual analysis of art to improve observation in clinical settings. This approach offers a practical tool for strengthening diagnostic skills and supporting more thoughtful clinical decision-making.

12:00 p.m. Lunch

A **Reflective Writing: How a Restorative Writing Practice Strengthens Connections**

Carolyn Roy-Bornstein

Two key factors in mitigating health care provider burnout and promoting wellness are finding purpose in our work and developing deeper connections with our patients, one another, ourselves, and the larger values and ideas that give our work meaning. Reflective writing has a proven track record of addressing meaning and connection in our jobs and in our lives. In this dynamic and interactive workshop, we will unpack the science behind the healing power of narrative. There will also be an opportunity to write to prompts and share in a safe space, to experience the power of personal connection and gain a tool that can be used perpetually to build meaning from our everyday interactions and clinical experiences, from the monumental to the mundane.

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C **Write Badly. Feel Better: Playing Hide and Seek with Your Internal Editor**

Fran Nadel

What if you could turn off the voice that says not good enough—even for just an hour? Drawing on the playful, image-based methods of Professor of Interdisciplinary Creativity and cartoonist Lynda Barry, this session is designed to help you get out of your own way, rediscover the pleasure of creative play, and tap into the subconscious mind that doesn't get much airtime in a clinical setting. Come ready to write fast, make a mess on the page, and surprise yourself. No writing experience needed. Skeptics especially welcome.

D **Poetry Open Forum**

Wynne Morrison and Catharyn Turner, II

Join fellow poetry lovers for an informal session to share and discuss poetry. Please bring a poem to share — either one you admire written by someone else or one of your own. This is not a workshop, and we will not be critiquing poems or discussing their merits — just sharing the work and any insights on the writing or publishing life! No prior writing experience required.

2:00 p.m. Break

2:15 p.m. Family Voices: Parent-Writer Perspectives on the Intersection of Writing and Healthcare Experiences

Moderated by Wynne Morrison

Healthcare is a part of the story of so many critical life experiences, ranging from how one copes with an illness, to how one adapts to new patterns of life or a new identity, to how one manages grief or responds to the death of a loved one. Healthcare professionals often work with families who must incorporate such experiences into their lives. In this panel, we will have a conversation with writer and oral historian Nicki Pombier, author and poet Cindy Savett, Professor of Writing and Health Studies Carol Schilling, and Professor of Sociology Maria Kefalas who have used writing to process or share their own responses to a child's illness or death. This facilitated discussion will allow ample time for audience questions.

3:30 p.m. Closing Remarks and Adjourn



Unless otherwise noted, faculty is from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and/or the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Course Directors

Wynne Morrison, MD, MBE

*Attending, Palliative Care and Critical Care
Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care*

Frances Nadel, MD, MSCE, MFA

*Attending, Emergency Medicine
Clinical Professor of Pediatrics*

Madhura Pradhan, MD

*Attending, Nephrology
Professor of Clinical Pediatrics*

Course Faculty

Dorene Balmer, PhD

*Professor of Pediatrics
Education Scientist at the MedEd Research Collaboratory*

Eron Friedlaender, MD, MPH

*Attending, Emergency Medicine
Professor of Clinical Pediatrics*

May Shum, MD

Pediatric Chief Resident

Catharyn A. Turner, II, MD, MEd

*Attending, Psychiatry
Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry*

Guest Faculty

Meggie Crnic, PhD

*Associate Director of the Edward D. Viner Center for Humanism
Cooper Medical School of Rowan University
Camden, NJ*

Linda Friedlaender, MS

*Senior Educator for Engagement
Yale Center for British Art
New Haven, CT*

Nicki Pombier, MFA, MA

*Author
Oral Historian*

Carolyn Roy-Bornstein, MD, FAAP

*Writer-in-Residence
Lawrence Family Medicine Residency program
Lawrence, MA*

Planning Committee

Carly Athan, MSW, LSW

David Bradley, BA

Colleen Crowley, BSN, RN

May Shum, MD

Faculty Bios

Dorene F. Balmer, PhD is a Professor of Pediatrics at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and Education Scientist at the MedEd Research Collaboratory at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In this role, she supports faculty and trainees in their pursuit of educational scholarship. She provides direct consultation and mentorship for qualitative research, leads educational programs offered by the Collaboratory, and supports large-scale program evaluations. Dorene's independent research agenda focuses on identity work and career construction in health professions education. She has pioneered a longitudinal qualitative approach to research, in which she follows individuals through time. Dorene is an associate editor for the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*. She has published over 100 peer-reviewed academic papers but is most excited about her narrative, nonfiction book derived from her longitudinal research, *The Long Arc of Training: Six Stories of Aspiring Doctors*.

Meggie Crnic, PhD is the Associate Director of the Edward D. Viner Center for Humanism at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University. Meggie's expertise spans the history of medicine, environmental health, bioethics, and medical education. She is the author of *The Beach Cure: A History of Healing on Northeastern Shores*.

Eron Friedlaender MD, MPH is a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and an Attending Physician in the Emergency Department at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She has deep expertise in the assessment and care of autistic youth in hospital settings. She leads clinical program development to shape a comprehensive approach to the care of autistic children and others with social and developmental disabilities within the hospital environment with an emphasis on translating successful school-based interventions into healthcare settings. She leads interdisciplinary initiatives in clinical program development, inclusive design, and health system quality and safety, and teaches nationally and internationally on models of care for autistic individuals. She also co-founded MIXdesign, a consultancy focused on inclusive design across architecture, public health, and policy, and applies social impact strategy to study how built environments affect health and wellbeing. She has formal training in Social Impact Strategy from the University of Pennsylvania and applies it to study how the built environment affects different populations using public health tools and measures. Most importantly, she is privileged to be a mother of three children, giving her the gift of loving an autistic son and witnessing the gorgeous relationship he has cultivated with his adoring sisters.

Linda Friedlaender, MS has been a museum educator at the Mount Holyoke College Museum of Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, and the Yale Center for British Art. Her program, Enhancing Observation Skills, has been used since 2002 in medical, nursing, physician assistant, and public health schools in the United States, Europe, and Asia. She is also very involved in programming for children and adults with disabilities and neurodivergence. Programs are designed based on participants' needs and interests, promote social inclusion and self-determination, and encourage personal expression by providing multisensory experiences

Faculty Bios (continued)

Neha Mani MD/PhD Candidate 2033 (she/her) grew up in New York City and is a student at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She is passionate about medical humanities, pediatrics, and refugee healthcare. She serves as co-lead of both the Medical Humanities Council and the Cornfeld Pediatric Society, and as an Operations Director for the Philadelphia Human Rights Clinic. Outside of medicine, Neha enjoys reading, doing the New York Times crossword, dancing, and spending time with family and friends.

Wynne Morrison MD, MBE (she/her) is a physician practicing pediatric critical care and palliative care at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She is a Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Her published work focuses on ethics, end-of-life care, and the medical humanities. Her poetry has appeared in multiple medical and literary journals, including *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *The Cortland Review* and *Tar River Poetry*. She is pursuing a master's in fine art in Poetry at the Warren Wilson Program for Writers.

Fran Nadel, MD, MSCE, MFA (she/her) is a pediatric emergency medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Her academic focus has been the use of simulation to improve clinical and communication skills as well as mentoring. She has had several short stories published, including one nominated for Best American Short Story and another shortlisted in the Oxford Flash Fiction contest. She earned her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Nicki Pombier MA, MFA is an oral historian and writer whose work explores the intersections of oral history, disability, and the arts, with a focus on listening beyond speech. Her scholarship received the 2021 Oral History Association Article Award, and she was honored with The New School's 2021 Distinguished University Teaching Award. She has co-created public-facing oral history and exhibition projects, including *File/Life: We Remember Stories of Pennhurst*, a community-driven collaboration recognized with the 2024 Kimmel Family Experience Award and national honors from the National Council on Public History and the Disability History Association. From 2020–2025, she taught in Columbia University's Oral History MA Program, where she co-led *Serious Play*, a course that reimagines oral history through embodied practice, sensory memory, and performance. She is currently writing *Mother Tongue*, a memoir about disability, care, and learning to listen differently through her relationship with her son.

Madhura Pradhan, MD is a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and is a nephrologist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where she pursues her interest in the humanities alongside clinical practice. She facilitates a narrative medicine writing group at CHOP and co-edits its literary and arts magazine, *Diastole*. Four years ago, she initiated the Humanities in Medicine conference, building it through sustained commitment and effort as a forum to bring together health care providers engaged in the role of the humanities in medicine and to deepen their integration into clinical practice.

Carolyn Roy-Bornstein, MD, FAAP is a pediatrician and the Writer-in-Residence at the Lawrence Family Medicine Residency program in Lawrence, Massachusetts where she leads residents in Narrative Medicine workshops designed to enhance empathy, deepen their relationships with patients and each other, and re-connect them with their deepest values. She is the author of four books, most recently *A Prescription for Burnout: Restorative Writing for Healthcare Professionals*. She is also a contributing author to *Narrative Medicine: A Guidebook to Transforming Hearts and Minds*. Her essays, book reviews, and opinion

Faculty Bios (continued)

pieces have been published in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, *JAMA*, the *Journal of Medical Humanities*, *Physician Leadership Journal*, *Psychiatric Times*, *KevinMD*, *Patient Education and Counseling*, *Teachers & Writers magazine*, and many other places.

May Shum, MD is a Pediatric Chief Resident at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where her clinical interests span Pediatric Hospital Medicine and Clinical Informatics. She is Deputy Editor of the Section of Pediatric Trainees Feature in *Pediatrics* and serves on the editorial board of *Diastole*, CHOP's literary and arts magazine. Her own creative work has appeared in *Diastole* and *Pediatric Critical Care Medicine*. As both a speaker and committee planner for the Medical Humanities Conference, she brings a passion for cultivating spaces where the art and science of medicine can inform and enrich one another.

Tova Tachau, MD Candidate 2029 (she/her) grew up in Radnor, PA, and is a student at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She is deeply interested in literary representations of medicine, the history of anatomical and surgical education, and the narrative structures of medical practice and training. During her time at Penn, she has co-led the Medical Humanities Council, participated in the Penn Global Surgery Group, and volunteered at the United Community Clinic. She was recently awarded an American Osler Society fellowship to conduct research on the history of anatomy pedagogy and cadaveric dissection in 19th-century London. Outside of academics, Tova enjoys training in circus arts at the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts and reading outdoors.

Catharyn A. Turner, II, MD, MEd, FAAP is a pediatrician and child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to becoming a doctor, she earned her Bachelor's degree at Bryn Mawr College and had a career teaching English and science to secondary school students. As a pediatrician and psychiatrist, she strives to reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care. Dr. Turner writes poetry and short prose in her limited free time. She enjoys reading, theatre, (current favorites are Hamilton and Hadestown), Scrabble, Boggle, and all sorts of wordplay. Volunteering for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at the national level has become her favorite spring sport.

Panelist Bios

Elena Fratto, PhD is an Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton. Her research focuses on the Health and Environmental Humanities, narrative theory, and the rhetorical intersections of literature and science in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Russophone literature and visual arts in dialogue with West European traditions. She is the author of *Medical Storyworlds: Health, Illness, and Bodies in Russian and European Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* and co-editor of *Russian Literature of the Anthropocene*. Her in-progress book, *Metabolic Modernities*, investigates the concept of "metabolism" as energy transformation in Russophone literature and culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

Maria Kefalas, PhD is a sociologist and professor at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia who has written on topics ranging from single motherhood to the rural brain drain. Following her daughter Cal's diagnosis with a rare genetic disease, she became a prominent advocate for genomic medicine and co-founded The Calliope Joy Foundation to fund research and support families living with leukodystrophy. Her latest book is a memoir titled *Harnessing Grief*.

Panelist Bios (continued)

Rebecca Mueller, PhD (she/her) is an Assistant Professor of Medicine (Translational Medicine and Human Genetics) at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine and Director of Research for the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling Program at Penn. She is a qualitative researcher, historian of medicine, and a licensed genetic counselor whose work focuses on the ethical, social, and legal implications of genomics. Her NHGRI-funded research uses a disability lens to examine prognostic uncertainty in genetics through the experiences of adults with childhood-onset genetic conditions. She mentors graduate students across translational research and serves on national committees focused on diversity, disability inclusion, and ethics in clinical genetics and precision medicine.

Cindy Savett, BA is the author of two full length poetry collections and four chapbooks. For close to twenty years she led workshops in several psychiatric hospitals in the Philadelphia area, bringing poetry to inpatients weekly. Her poems blend a personal awareness of grief with the intricacies of a spiritual life, often stemming from her relationship to the sudden death of her daughter, Rachel. Cindy is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania where she studied the dialectical nature of existence.

Elaine Scarry, PhD serves as the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and General Theory of Value at Harvard University and is a Senior Fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows. Her many books include *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, which examines language in the contexts of pain, torture, and war. Elected to the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, her awards include honorary degrees from Northwestern University and Uppsala University in Sweden, as well as the Truman Capote Award for literary criticism, and most recently, the Global Health and Peace Award co-awarded by the International Physician for the Prevention of Nuclear War and Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. Her research interests include the language of physical pain, beauty and its relation to justice, citizenship and consent, the 19th-Century British Novel, 20th-Century Drama, and mental, verbal, and material creation. She previously served as the William T. Fitts, Jr. Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania.

Carol Schilling, PhD is the parent of a quirky, inventive, compassionate son, who became disabled at 16. She teaches literature, the ethics of care, health humanities, and disability studies at Haverford College. She previously taught in medical schools and in Penn's Master of Bioethics program. Her caregiving experiences inescapably inform her teaching, research, and writing.



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