



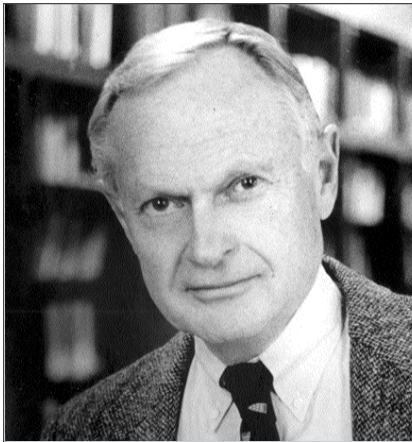
# The Arnold P. Gold Foundation

Fostering Humanism in Medicine

Winter 2005

## Contemplating Humanism

By Sherwin B. Nuland, MD



[Editor's Note: We are pleased to introduce this new guest column, and are fortunate that Dr. Sherwin B. Nuland, a member of The Foundation's Medical and Professional Advisory Council, is our first contributor.]

Of the several cogent reasons for which physicians and students should be encouraged to study the history of our art, the one that has had the greatest personal meaning to me was best expressed by that storied teacher of medicine, William Osler. Osler spoke of what he called "the silent influence of character upon character," by which he meant that there are lessons of empathy and idealism to be found in the lives of many of the past's greatest contributors to medical knowledge. Underlying our tradition of emotional detachment and scientific objectivity is a historic sense of calling, a sense of personal obligation to the worried sick, which has a way of bringing out the best in us.

I have more than sometimes become overwhelmed by the so-called biomedical model of disease. The very characteristics of today's scientifically disciplined mode of approaching evidence that have been of such enormous value in so vastly improving diagnosis and therapy have, paradoxically, threatened to make me less adequate a healer. There is within biomedicine a fearful capacity to distance us from the humanity not only of our patients but of ourselves as well. We need to find some way of holding fast to the image of caring that has always been such a powerful force in drawing idealistic young people to our profession.

### THE IMAGE OF CARING

Ironically, we senior physicians too often erode the very image we admire so much, in the very act of teaching our students to be like us. We all know of antidotes to this poison, and we attempt to administer them in the form of academic courses we nowadays provide in medical humanities and ethics. But, like the rest of medicine, such things are best taught at the bedside, by example. And in this too, we may look to the silent influence of character upon character as exemplified by our own behavior as clinicians, but also by the great characters of the past.

### THE MORALITY OF COMPASSION

In this connection I find myself thinking of Herman Nothnagel, chief physician to Vienna's Allgemeines Krankenhaus during the last third of the 19th century, whose

career has taught me that it is impossible to be a true healer without the morality of compassion. Hundreds of foreign physicians thronged to Nothnagel's wards each year to learn — in addition to the emerging technology of which he was an acknowledged master — that beneficence is not only a moral obligation, but also that clues to diagnosis and reinforcements to therapy are the natural by-products of kindness. And he expressed his basic philosophy of responsibility to the humanity of his patients in a single oft-repeated phrase for which he became renowned: "Only a person of goodness can be a great physician."

Dr. Nuland is Clinical Professor of Surgery at the Yale University School of Medicine, where he also teaches medical history and bioethics. He is a Fellow at Yale's Institute for Social and Policy Studies and the author of several books including: **Doctors: The Biography of Medicine**, the best selling, **How We Die**, which won the National Book Award for nonfiction and the 2004 account of his father's depression, **Lost in America**. In addition he has also written for major magazines including **The New Yorker**, and has received many awards and prizes.

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## Encouraging Student Service A Memorial Gift & Family Legacy

"...Chances were, once you met Kenny, you never forgot him!" **The Kenneth Adler Fund for Innovative Medical Student-Initiated Projects** was established in 2004 at The Gold Foundation in memory of a charismatic and enthusiastic young man who loved life, humor, sports and family. A tragic car accident in 1994 injured Ken and killed two of his good friends. For nearly 10 years, the Adlers sought the best possible doctors to help Ken, both physically and emotionally. The family "came to know our greatest need was nourishment of our hearts and souls."

After Ken died, his parents Janet and Bruce Adler, and his brother Michael, decided to support medical students who wish to serve their communities. Through participation in the selection of the fund's recipients, the Adlers will "encourage programs that will bring pride to Ken's name, and prioritize those values that are vital and absolutely necessary for excellent medical care. These include compassion, empathy, trust, mutual respect and emotional support. While Kenny's life was too short, we want to ensure that, if one day, another young person's life is forever changed in a moment, we hope that his/her physicians may benefit from this legacy."

## Celebrating Success!

Proceeds from the 2004 Associates Committee's **Masquerade Ball** and auctions are providing direct care to underserved patients and their families as well as meaningful training opportunities for pediatric residents through four Gold Foundation pediatric *Home Visit Programs (HVP)* in the New York area.



Photo courtesy of (201) Magazine

We express grateful thanks to the Planning Committee for making the Ball a festive and successful event. Pictured at the New York City Fire Museum on November 13 are – from left: Stephanie Weinstein, Lauren Goldberg, David Kaufthal, Dana Adler, Chair - Barb Golub, Arianne Schreer, Alexis Pizzurro, Binta Brown, Amelia Gold Benson and Evie Klein. We thank also all the attendees and auction donors for their generosity.

## A Mysterious Letter: An Appreciated Recognition

Dear Gold Foundation,

Receiving the *Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award* coincided with one of the most difficult periods of my surgical residency. I was two months into a 24 on/24 hours off surgical intensive care block, and to say that I was physically, emotionally, and psychologically abused is an oversimplification. I had three more shifts left and was on the verge of either implosion or explosion, when a mysterious letter appeared in my mailbox. I was the recipient of a resident teaching award for displaying humanity, integrity and sensitivity in working with medical students.

There must have been some mistake. At that moment I felt anything but humane, complete or sensitive, but in the days that followed I embraced the idea and it grew stronger and bolder within me. Former medical students congratulated me in passing and I realized with inner satisfaction that maybe I had contributed to their education. In a learning environment where residents hear criticism for every misstep but never praise for what we do well, you cannot possibly imagine how gratifying and meaningful it was to receive your organization's acknowledgement.

A week later, I attended an award ceremony that filled me with such excitement, joy and hope that my eyes filled with tears. That warm and moving celebration of the medical arts reminded me of why I made such a life-consuming commitment in the first place. I am honored, excited and a bit relieved to be associated with a foundation that exists to help direct future generations of doctors back to the simple dignity and humility of caring for people.

Thank you for supporting us tired, frustrated, overworked and under-appreciated residents. Thank you for the generous gift and the pin which I wear with pride on my lab coat each day. Thank you for championing the truest, most important ideals of the medical profession.

Sincerely,

Daniel Klaristenfeld, MD  
Fourth-Year Surgical Resident  
Brown University, July 2004

## Humanism in Action: Teaching, Inspiring & Volunteering

### Meeting 21st Century Challenges

*Preparing doctors to serve patients from diverse backgrounds*

We are increasingly aware that 21st century health-care challenges include “an ever-changing mix of patients and providers.” With support from The Gold Foundation, Herbert Swick, MD, Executive Director of the Institute of Medicine and Humanities in Missoula, MT, and Peter Koehn, PhD, Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Montana, are spear-heading innovative efforts to prepare medical students to better serve the varied, immigrant and disadvantaged populations they will inevitably encounter.



*Drs. Herbert Swick & Peter Koehn*

Texas-San Antonio, have initiated steps to develop a model curriculum they are calling “transnational competence” or “TC”. These teams were joined by faculty from Northwestern University, the University of New Mexico and the University of Montana at an intensive five-day workshop. The meeting’s objective was to explore “TC” as “a new conceptual model by which physicians could learn how better to care for patients from distinct cultural backgrounds.”

### “TRANSNATIONAL COMPETENCE”

Teams of experienced educators from four pilot medical schools; Mayo Medical School, Northeastern Ohio University College of Medicine, the University of Massachusetts and the University of

### DEVELOPING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

The “TC” curriculum utilizes tools including: exercises requiring students to work closely with patients and family members from varied cultural, ethnic, generational, and socioeconomic backgrounds; group sharing of insights; reflective writing; humanities resources (e.g. art and literature); and rigorous evaluation of both the students’ learning, and curriculum experiences. A goal is to replicate the “TC” model at other medical schools.

### Volunteer of the Year 2004: Mary Meehan



*Mary Meehan*

We salute our volunteer bookkeeper for her dedicated and expert service in support of The Foundation’s work since 1996. The staff welcomes Mary’s weekly evening visits and treasures her abilities, passions and Bronx-Irish humor. When she isn’t volunteering, Mary is office manager at Donald Aronson Consulting Corporation, which takes pride in supporting her volunteer activities. She also has worked on behalf of Gilda’s

Club and is a loyal Bruce Springsteen, Notre Dame and Oakland Raiders fan. Our biggest fear is that her love of Hawaii will one day lead her away from NJ. Mary writes that she has “a profound admiration and respect for everyone involved with The Foundation and for all the caring and compassion that they share everyday.”

If you would like to volunteer your time and talent, please contact Travis O’Donnell at 201-567-7999 or email: [Todonnell@gold-foundation.org](mailto:Todonnell@gold-foundation.org).

### “The Search for Compassion and Meaning in Medical Education”



*Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen*

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen spoke about this topic at the 2004 Gold Foundation’s annual *Humanism and Medicine* lecture at the national meeting of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) on November 6 in Boston. The lecture, attended by approximately 500 medical school deans, educators and administrators, is supported by a grant from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey.

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, a member of The Gold Foundation’s Medical and Professional Advisory Council (MPAC), is Founder and Medical Director of the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal. Her work with cancer patients touched millions in the Bill Moyers PBS special “Healing and the Mind.” Dr. Remen’s innovative programs train physicians in relationship-centered care. Practicing physician and clinical professor of family and community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, Dr. Remen is author of *Kitchen Table Wisdom and My Grandfather’s Blessings*.





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## Practicing Humanism: "A Human Treasure"

Gold Doc Honored by Patients at Surprise Dinner

Dr. Phillip S. Wolf, Professor of Cardiology at the Department of Medicine at the University of Colorado, School of Medicine was recently honored as a *Gold Doc* at a surprise dinner party at the home of Barbara and Lee Mendel in Denver. Norma Wagoner, PhD, Director of *The Gold Humanism Honor Society*, represented The Foundation and presented Dr. Wolf with a certificate, the "Humanism in Medicine" lapel pin and our congratulations.



*Dr. Phil Wolf, Barbara Mendel and Norma Wagoner  
 Photo: Carol Levin*

According to Barbara Emery Mendel, daughter of Dr. Wolf's patient, Elizabeth Sadwith, Dr. Wolf is: "the epitome of a medical professional who fosters humanism in medicine. Dr. Wolf was not only responsive; he was attentive, empathetic to Mom's fears of surgery and clearly understood her reluctance to go through the procedure. He was also very clear in his explanation of how her health would be remarkably improved within a short period of time following surgery. ....Once Mom returned to my home to recuperate, Dr. Wolf made house calls to check her. ... he was available and compassionate, not only to Mom but to our whole family."

### A TRUE HUMANITARIAN

Patients Carol and Larry Levin described Dr. Wolf as "a true humanitarian whose care of and dedication to his patients is legendary. He is the consummate model for both his students and practicing physicians in all fields of medicine." Ninety year old patient and admirer, Bernard J. Schaffer wrote that Dr. Wolf "...is always there for his wife and family, for his many friends and for people he barely knows who may need him. ... Indeed, Phil Wolf is a human treasure."

The Foundation is pleased to recognize outstanding and compassionate *Gold Docs*. Send your *Gold Doc* nomination to The Foundation's office at: 619 Palisade Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 or email to: [arlene@gold-foundation.org](mailto:arlene@gold-foundation.org).

## The Arnold P. Gold Foundation

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