
UAMS Medical Humanities Newsletter – May 2025

From University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences <uamsonline@uams.edu>

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May 2025

Mediating Clinical Ethics

During the second week of February 2025, the bioethics faculty who serve as clinical ethicists at both UAMS and ACH were part of over 16 hours of training in conflict resolution in clinical health care—a.k.a., “bioethics mediation.” Developed in the 1990s as a way of providing ethics help when healthcare conflicts arise, mediation is practiced in many institutions across the country.



Leading the training for UAMS faculty (and others) was Haavi Morreim, Ph.D., JD, long time clinical ethicist at UT-Memphis and one of the nation’s experts on bioethics mediation. The workshop is designed to help participants learn the

principles and practices of conflict resolution, and uses case-based role playing to apply these insights to ethically charged situations in medicine.

"Haavi is a wonderful, enthusiastic teacher," assistant professor, Brandy Fox, Ph.D., said. "I think the most valuable things I got from the training were tips on how to remain and convey that one is impartial and strategies to spur, encourage, and nudge conversations or ideas from participants."

"Conflict is, for better or worse, an abiding presence in healthcare," Lauren Bunch, Ph.D., HEC-C, assistant professor in the department and nationally certified ethics consultant, said. "This workshop equipped me with evidence-based tools for recognizing conflict and responding in ways that are respectful to the affected parties and oriented toward practical resolution."

"The neutrality and clarity of the mediation language and the construction of the mediation process taught during the workshop are instrumental skills that I can employ to ensure that everyone can tell their story and express their point of view," said Eva Regel, DBe, assistant professor.

These skills help build on the existing training and practices of the members of the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service, a service that is available to any individual or team related to an ethically charged case across both the UAMS and ACH systems. You can reach the service by sending a page to 501-405-8134, an email to ethicsconsult@uams.edu, or through UAMS Epic using the Clinical Ethics order.

Ethics Simulations Prove Valuable Educational Experience for M1/M2 Students

In order to help medical students better understand the practices and experiences of ethically challenging situations in medicine, the department faculty have all M1 and M2 students participate in an Ethics Simulations twice per year. Led by Lauren Bunch, Ph.D., as part of the ethics education in the Practice of Medicine 1 and 2 courses, the simulations take small groups of students through a structured clinical situation using standardized patients and the resources of the UAMS Simulation Center.



Developed several years back, the ethics simulations focus on patient cases that raise ethical concerns—from issues of informed consent and identifying appropriate decision makers to responding to patient vulnerabilities and concern for allocating scarce resources. Each simulation takes almost 90 minutes, with students being introduced to initial details of the case, talking to actors and M4s who play the roles of clinicians, patients, and family members, determining next steps, implementing a plan, and evaluating the ethics of the situation and their responses to it. A highly intensive modality, ethics simulations take three to four afternoons in order to get all 170+ students through the educational experience and requires three to five faculty members working more than four hours per afternoon.



Student feedback has been overwhelmingly and consistently positive regarding the simulations. One student notes, “This was a great way to get us to think about ethical issues without bias and [to] understand the complexities of making these hard decisions.” Another student said, “I like that we had a chance to divide the encounter up and talk about it in phases as a team. It helped with the thought process of the ethical scenario.”

Given their success, the department is happy to offer to help develop and run ethics simulations across the enterprise. Contact us at humanities@uams.edu to

start the discussion.

Honors in Humanities Track to Graduate Its First Full Cohort of Students

When Honors Convocation/Graduation comes around in May 2025, this year's ceremony will include the first full cohort of medical students to earn Honors in Humanities. Started five years ago when the pandemic struck, the Honors in Humanities track, directed by [Angela Scott, M.D., Ph.D.](#), took a little time to find traction, but now several students have completed the track while also completing the regular medical school curriculum.



In order to be part of the track, students apply at the beginning of the new calendar year in their M1 year. The selective process takes only as many students as there are humanities-educated faculty available to provide individual mentoring. The students participate in regular seminars during the spring and summer of the first year, then they transition to regular mentored study for years two and three. During that time they identify a humanities-oriented project and complete the project in their fourth year. Two examples of such projects are (a) the use of short story to understand and critique clinical humility and (b) historical and regional practices and differences surrounding death and burials.

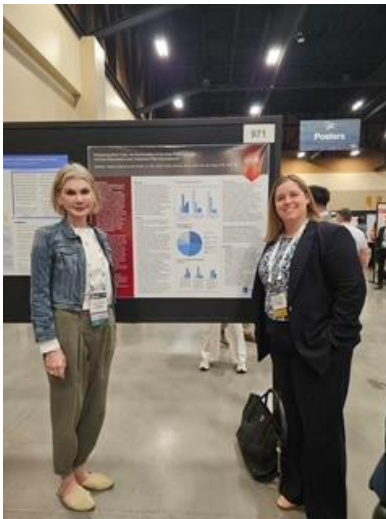
Any faculty with substantive training in the humanities (e.g., literature, history, philosophy, religion, art history/critique, and so on) should contact Dr. Scott (alscott2@uams.edu) to see how you might be able to help our students study medical humanities and arts in this track.

Scholarly Attention on the Ethics of Burn Care

[Eva Regel, DBe](#), assistant professor, participated at the annual conference of the American Burn Association on April 8-11, 2025. She was tapped to be a co-director of a Sunrise Symposium, where she co-facilitated a panel of burn surgeons, firefighters, and allied professionals discussing moral distress and moral injury in burn care. Moral distress and

injury are challenging experiences for providers, and Dr. Regel's work will help participants identify and respond to the morally challenging features of their professional work.

Dr. Regel was also a co-author and co-presenter for a poster, "Enhancing Burn Care: An Examination of Nursing Roles in Goals-of-Care Discussions and Treatment Plan Development."



The poster presents results of research from the Arkansas Children's Hospital Burn Unit. We know that nurses spend the most time with the patients and families, making them excellent liaisons among the care team, patients, and families when discussing goals of care. However, nursing participation varies widely across burn centers. This project examines the role of nurses within the burn unit at the ACH in order to identify potential areas of improvement in communication and management of burn patients.

Dr. Regel has long had an interest in the ethics of burn care, and she serves on the American Burn Association's Ethical Issues Committee where she co-chairs Clinical Ethics Consultation Subcommittee.

Faculty Profile

The Department of Medical Humanities and Bioethics began as the Division of Medical Humanities in the academic year 1982-83. At that time, Chris Hackler, Ph.D., was the only full-time faculty member in the division (though there was a post-doctoral member of the division as well as a couple of part-time people). Over 40 years on, the department is home to four full-time faculty members, a number of people who work elsewhere at UAMS who have primary and secondary faculty appointments, several part-time instructors, and adjuncts. These people do important and interesting work and are just good people; so, with each issue of the newsletter, we will offer a profile of one of our faculty members.

Lauren Bunch, Ph.D.

We begin this series with a profile of Lauren Bunch, Ph.D. Dr. Bunch is full-time faculty in the Department as an Assistant Professor of Medical Humanities & Bioethics. In this role she also serves as Clinical Ethicist for both UAMS and ACH. Dr. Bunch has now been in her position for over 960 days (about 2.5 years) having come to UAMS after serving as Assistant Professor of Bioethics and Professionalism for Mercer University School of Medicine. Her educational path began at the University of Richmond with a degree in philosophy. She then earned an masters and a doctorate in philosophy from Duke University, and rounded out her training with a Clinical Ethics Fellowship at Alden March Bioethics Institute, Albany Medical College.



Dr. Bunch has taken on a number of responsibilities in the Department. Along with clinical consulting duties, she has a sharp focus on education. Dr. Bunch directs the POM 1 and POM 2 ethics curricula, is the associate director for the Honors in Medical Humanities track, as well. She organizes the bi-monthly Ethics Grand Rounds series that the Department sponsors at ACH, and teaches M4 medical humanities & bioethics electives.

Her scholarly focus looks at issues in clinical ethics, virtue ethics, medical education.

A few thoughts from her on questions we posed:

Something you like about Little Rock/Central Arkansas:

My wonderful colleagues in the Department of Medical Humanities and Bioethics

A talent you have or activity/hobby you like to do:

I am a quilter

A book or movie you would recommend to a friend:

Anything by David Sedaris

A food or meal that you loved to eat when you were growing up:

Orange buttermilk salad, which is a delectable concoction of mandarin oranges, buttermilk, JELL-O, and Cool Whip.

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