

Goodness: Expressed in Caregiving

Institute of Medicine, Education, and Spirituality at Ochsner (IMESO)

Compassionate Presence

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Caregiving Replaced by Efficiency

“Economic rationality with its imperative of containing cost and maximizing efficiency has come to mute the moral, emotional, religious, and aesthetic expressions of patients and caregivers. “

Goodness

“The simple act of trying to help just one person, in a desperate situation where my skills were poorly matched to the challenge, turned out to represent the most meaningful of all human experiences. A burden lifted. This was true north. And the compass pointed not at self-glorification, or at materialism, or even at medical science—instead it pointed at the goodness that we all hope desperately to find within ourselves and others.”

Collins, F.S.. (2006). *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. Free Press, New York 218.

Caregiving

“Ultimately, caregiving is about doing good for others, in the world, as naïve as it may sound, is what medicine is really about. That is what draws people to its practice, even if it’s also about technology, biomedical science, and markets. That moral core of medicine may seem abstract, until you see health professionals passionately struggling to be useful, compassionate, responsive, and responsible while working with the indifference of bureaucratic rules, the cold counting and costing of institutional audits, and hard-to-balance personal demands on their time and concern.”

Kleinman, A. (2013), From Illness as Culture to Caregiving as a Moral Experience. N. Engl J. Med 36:15

Advice

- Don't stop learning
- Always be accountable
- Never forget the patient is first
- Effort and persistence are paramount
- Be open-minded
- Invite criticism and have courage to respond
- Be honest about your faults

Caregiving Regained

“A virtue is an acquired human quality, the possession and the exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.” (McIntyre)

Meaning

“Caregiving is one of the foundational moral meanings and practices in human experience everywhere. It defines human value and resists crude reduction to counting and costing.” (Klienman)

Caregiving
is
Essential
to
Humanity

- Caregiving is an indelible part of relations between partners and the raising of children.
- Caregiving is the response to the infirmities of aged parents and grandparents.

Healthcare Vocation

- It is an ancient lineage across history and societies.
- Nursing, medicine, and the allied health disciplines justify their status as healing professions by underlining their professional commitment to caregiving.
- Religious caregivers respond to suffering with the use of rituals that animate caregiving in both social and subjective realms.

Values and Actual Practices

“Given how little time-in-the curricula most medical schools devote to the principles, values, and practice of caregiving, perhaps we should allow medical schools to remove caregiving as a goal of medical education and restrict the curriculum to technical clinical competence and biomedical knowledge.”

Caregiving Defined

For caregiving is the amelioration of pain and suffering. The moral face of caregiving demands the acknowledgment of personhood of the sufferers and affirmation of their condition and struggle.

Basic Moral Tasks of Caregiving

- Touch on many levels
- Medical ingenuity and technical expertise
- Empathic witnessing
- Listening to the illness narrative
- Providing moral solidarity through sustained engagement and responsibility over the course of chronic illness and in the terminal periods
- Presence – being there existentially even though nothing practical can be done.

Doing Good For Others

- Patient-centered care or caregiving as a value is basically “doing good for the other.”
- It describes the value of altruism which medical professionals need in abundance.

Moral Core of Medicine

- “The moral core of medicine may seem abstract, until you see health professionals passionately struggling to be useful, compassionate, responsive, and responsible while working with the indifference of bureaucratic rules, the cold counting and costing of institutional audits, and hard-to-balance personal demands on their time and concern.”

Gift Exchange

Care resembles gift exchange between individuals whose relationship to each other really matters. It is part of lived experience which extends into the caring relationship

Resources

- Kleinman, A. From Illness as Culture to Caregiving as Moral Experience. N Engl J Med 368;15 April 11, 2013
- Kleinman, A. The Art of Medicine: Caregiving as Moral Experience. www.thelance.com Vol. 380 November 3, 2012