



# Storytelling



**Most things that we know and are important to us are because of stories:**

- **family stories**
- **history**
- **(the book of) religion**

A photograph of a stone path with a yellow caution tape strip. The path is made of irregular, greyish-brown stones. A bright yellow strip of caution tape is laid across the path, slightly off-center. In the background, there is some dry, brownish grass and a small green plant in the bottom right corner.

# Narrative

## **Narrative Medicine**

- **Humanities and Medicine movement worldwide that is interested in bringing an appreciation for the humanities back into medical training to offset the 'medicine as science' approach that completely changed the face of medicine in the last century.**
- **Integral to this is the fact that doctors are now picking up the proverbial pen in writing in non-scientific ways about medicine.**





**Atul Gawande**  
**"Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End"**

- **We have come to medicalize aging, frailty, and death, treating them as if they were just one more clinical problem to overcome. However, it is not only medicine that is needed in one's declining years but life – a life with meaning, a life as rich and full as possible under the circumstances.**

## **Training Medical Practitioners in Narrative Medicine**

**Columbia University in New York has taken the lead on this and offers courses at all levels in training health care practitioners in this new skill set.**

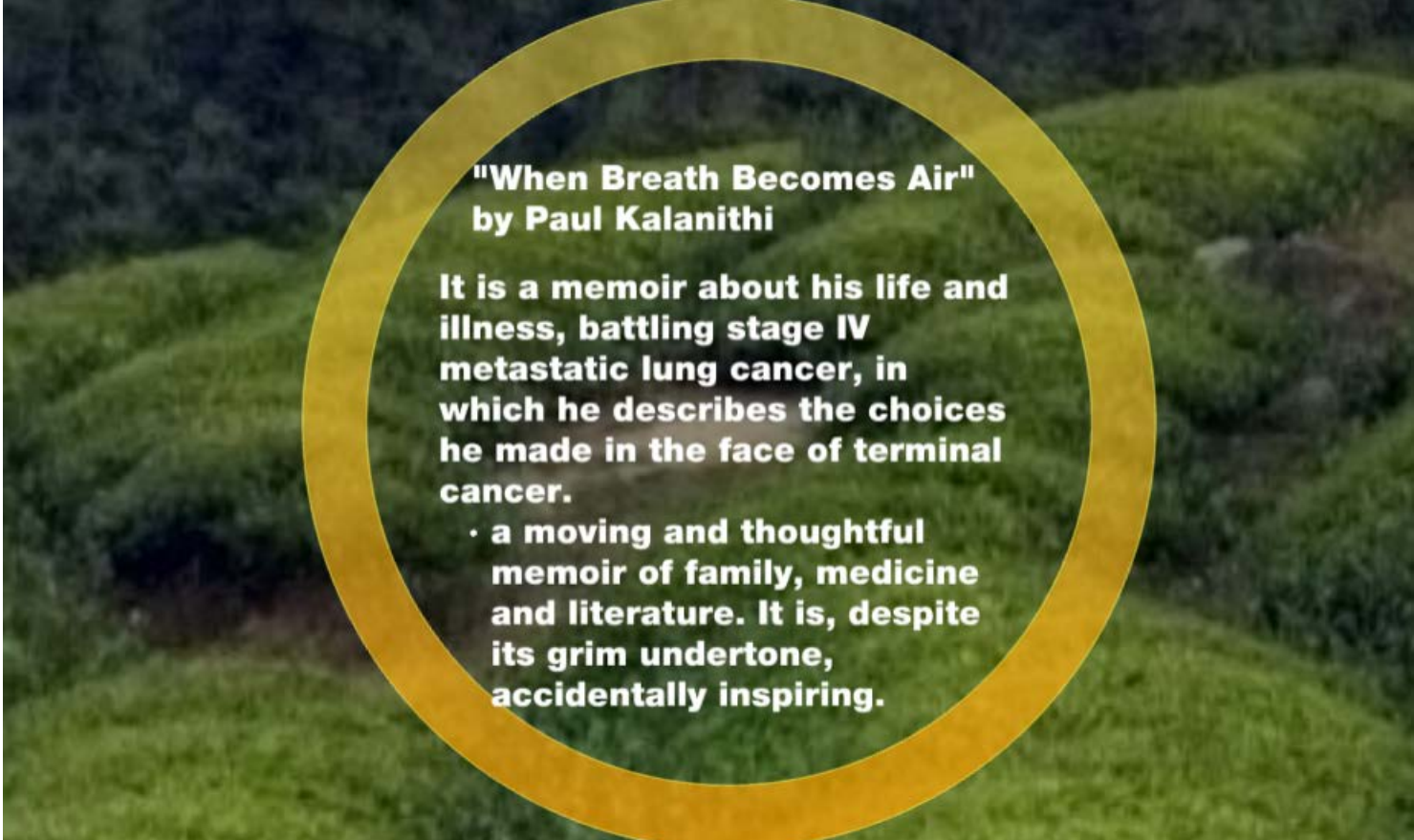
- Medicine practiced with narrative competence is a model for humane and effective medical practice**

**A medical student in our curriculum has decided to track his journey through a psychiatry rotation by writing short stories from the angles of the patient, the psychiatrist, and affected family members. He has actually submitted one of them to a writing competition.**

A photograph of a green field with the word "Patient" written in white cursive script. The field is a vibrant green, and the text is centered in the middle of the image. The background is slightly blurred, showing a horizon line in the distance.

*Patient*





**"When Breath Becomes Air"  
by Paul Kalanithi**

**It is a memoir about his life and illness, battling stage IV metastatic lung cancer, in which he describes the choices he made in the face of terminal cancer.**

- a moving and thoughtful memoir of family, medicine and literature. It is, despite its grim undertone, accidentally inspiring.**





**Think of an illness that affected you, or a loved one, that was of import in your life and describe how it changed you (even in a small way).**



**Take a few minutes to think of 4-5 things that matter most to you in your life. Pick one to share with your table partner, telling them why it is so important to you.**



**Which one ability/facility is the most important for you to have until the end of your days**





**“Story telling is a mirror into our  
shared humanity”  
Terry Tempest Williams**

## **The Care of the Sick unfolds in Stories**

**The effective practice of healthcare requires the ability to recognize, absorb, interpret, and act on the stories and plights of others.**

**I am interested in creating an online library of "Patient Stories" to be accessed by other patients, family members, and health care practitioners, serving as an informational and educational tool for patient centered care.**

- If you are interested in engaging with this initiative please drop me an email under the subject heading "Patient Stories" to: [niamh.kelly@ubc.ca](mailto:niamh.kelly@ubc.ca)**