

HEALING: TOWARD A PRACTICAL DEFINITION AND CLINICAL UNDERSTANDING

Joseph Burley¹, Mary Jane McDowell²

1 Corresponding author: Queen's University, Prince Edward Family Health Team, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
jburley20@cogeco.ca

2 Prince Edward Family Health Team, Picton, Ontario, Canada

Healing is included as one of the fundamental goals of medicine. It is a term frequently used in health care but often poorly defined and misunderstood. The purpose of this workshop is to address this problem and will be interactive and discussion driven. We will briefly present a 'working definition' of the concept which will include an outline of the 'realms' of healing work from the diagnostic process through to management and treatment. We will use a case based introduction as a way of demonstrating our understanding of what the healing process entails. We will offer a number of alternate definitions of the term and examine the phenomenology of "lived experience" of illness using the work of Merleau-Ponty, Toombs, Cavel and Cassell and others.

Existential issues which lead to the "brokenness" experienced through illness and suffering will be explored. We will open and facilitate a discussion of aspects and methods of healing with the goal being a clear and, to some degree, operationalised understanding of the concept(s) which we hope will be clinically useful and demonstrate the path(s) to "wholeness".

Areas which might be explored in the workshop will include the phenomenology of illness and suffering, the use of the clinician/patient/family relationship as the healing vehicle, intersubjectivity and empathy, the importance of narrative, collaborative and multidisciplinary care, the need to combine objective, empirical

(evidence based) knowledge and subjective first person (experiential) knowledge to understand the lived experience of suffering and illness and the methodology of Person Centered and whole person care. ■