Being with the Patient:
The “Nature of Clinical Evidence,” Revisited

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Some background:
Erikson:

“The Nature of Clinical Evidence”
In Insight and Responsibility:

Scientists get at the nature of things by finding out what they can do *to them*.

Clinicians learn about the nature of man by trying to do something *for* and *with* him.

More broadly, “mutuality”!
What’s become of this split?
Psychiatry, since the 1950s:

“Data-in-relation”

“Objective data”
- Standard dxs
- DSM III, IV, 5
- RCTs
- Neuroscience
- Many medications
- Evidence-based Rx
Psychiatry, since the 1950s (2):

“Data-in-relation”

“Objective data”

ACGME standards
NBPN
“Disorders”
Check-lists

relationship-based dx
longitudinal outcome data
Psychiatry, since the 1950s (2):

“Data-in-relation”  “Objective data”

Bleiberg,
Treating Personality Disorders in Children and Adolescents: a Relational Approach
And outside Psychiatry...

“Data-in-relation”

“Objective data”

Charon,

“reciprocity of recognition”
“The Reciprocity of Recognition — What Medicine Exposes about Self and Other”

Rita Charon
More outside Psychiatry...

“Data-in-relation”  “Objective data”

Epstein, relationship in primary care
Relationship in PsyRx and PsyAys
Global Assessment of Relational Functioning
PsyDyn Diag Manual
Shared Decision-making
More outside Psychiatry...

Surgeons’ tone of voice and malpractice history...

The anterior cingulate and relationship:
More outside Psychiatry...

Anthropologist T M Luhrmann: “Redefining Mental Illness” (NYTimes 1/17/15) citing British Psychological Society, “Understanding Psychosis and Schizophrenia”
Luhrmann:

- Psychosis and normal experience - overlap
- Individual meaning and preference
- NIH – Insel – RDCs vs DSM
- Social experience and brain function
From non-clinical fields:

“Data-in-relation”  “Objective data”

Buber, I and Thou
Twain, Huck Finn
Change thru relationship in literature

Huck and Jim
Out of Africa...

Ubuntu (humanity)

“umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”
(a person is a person through (other) persons)

Unhu
(traditional African jurisprudence)
Desmond Tutu:

[Ubuntu] means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in [yours]. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “a person is a person through other people.” It is not “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am human because I belong.” I participate, I share.
Closer to home:

A call for tolerance and understanding

Muslim students at Harvard: respond to Islamophobia with education paired with relationship building.

*The Crimson*, March 11, 2015
Going even further back…

“Data-in-relation”    “Objective data”

Ortega y Gassett:
“Yo soy yo
y mis circunstancias”

Troilus and Cressida
Knowing self only thru others...

Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida
ULYSSES
A strange fellow here
Writes me: 'That man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection;
As when his virtues shining upon others
Heat them and they retort that heat again
To the first giver.'

ACHILLES
This is not strange, Ulysses.
The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
Salutes each other with each other's form;
For speculation turns not to itself,
Till it hath travell'd and is mirror'd there
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all.
ULYSSES

I do not strain at the position,-It
is familiar,--but at the author's drift;
Who, in his circumstance, expressly proves
That no man is the lord of any thing,
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others:
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
Till he behold them form'd in the applause
Where they're extended; who, like an arch,
Reverberates the voice again, or, like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
His figure and his heat.
And lately, in Psychiatry...

Dynamics of prescribing:

And lately, in Psychiatry...

Dynamics of prescribing:

More, in Psychiatry...

Context:

- Bracken et al, “Psychiatry beyond the current paradigm.” BJP 2012
A clinical vignette...

- 19-year-old youth, “schizophrenic”
- Scattering ashes in office
- MD angry -> disclosure of Fa’s rages
- Changes direction of treatment
Data-in-relationship less visible; “Objective” data ascendant.

How do we see this?

- Scientific progress?
- Reductionistic care?
- Need for a new balance?
How does it happen? How might it change?

Remember,

“Every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets.” (IHI)
Relevant structures:

- Administrative requirements
- Reimbursement
- Training
- Research
- Patient feedback
Let’s hear from the audience...
Thank you!
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