The training sessions in which you are participating are using an interdisciplinary approach to provide medical participants with specific tools for improved communication with patients and colleagues. Research demonstrates that it is possible to teach improved communication skills and that physicians with strong skills in this area improve their own professional satisfaction, increase patient compliance; and reduce their exposure to medical malpractice liability. Our goals are to:

- teach improved medical communication skills,
- via innovative techniques (simulations, video review and theatre feedback),
- drawing on an interdisciplinary empirical research base (speech communication, law, medicine, theatre),
- in compressed, time-effective modules, and
- assess the efficacy of our experimental techniques, reporting on the results to the relevant professional communities.

Based on pilot work in this and related areas, we believe the combination of simulations and teaching theatre techniques will be a very “sticky” (enduring) form of learning for participants and can be conveyed in modules in a way that is consistent with the time pressures of the medical curriculum.

The four sessions of instruction you receive are focusing on specific skill areas:

1. opening the interview/developing rapport,
2. communicating effectively in the "normal" medical interview
3. utilizing listening skills (both to patients and to medical personnel),
4. discussing potentially embarrassing or sensitive topics.

We will also address cultural differences between providers and patients.

Session One: Opening the Interview, Developing Rapport March 12, 2009

Advance required reading:

Advance assignment (to be completed before the beginning of Session One). You will receive a link to a survey in which you will be asked: What has been your best communication experience with a patient? What has been your worst communication experience with a patient? In general, what is your biggest challenge with communication? What would you like to learn more about to improve your skills?

Homework: practice the three techniques taught. Record via survey monkey instrument in advance of next session. Due Date: March 18, by 6 p.m. Go to next session prepared to discuss your experiences.
Session Two: Empathy, Taking a Sexual History           March 19

Homework: practice the three techniques taught. Record via survey monkey instrument in advance of next session. Due Date: March 25, by 6 p.m. Go to next session prepared to discuss your experiences.

Read before Session Two:

Session Three: Using Listening Skills             March 26

Read before Session Three

Homework: practice the three techniques taught. Record via survey monkey instrument in advance of next session. Due Date: April 1, by 6 p.m.

Session Four: Invest in the End; Delivering Grave News        April 2

Advance required reading:
Read before Session Four:

Dale Brashers, Ph.D., is an professor and head in Speech Communication. His research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health and has been published in communication and health sciences journals. One project involved training people living with HIV to communicate effectively in order to manage their disease. He also has conducted research on decision making for men living with prostate cancer and on how patients waiting on organ transplants manage the uncertainty they experience.

Kathleen F. Conlin, Ph.D., is a Tony-award winning director, having directed more than sixty professional theatre, dance and multi-media presentations and served as producing artistic director at many more. She was named as a Fellow of American Theatre in ceremonies at the Kennedy Center in 2005 and is immediate past president of the National Theatre Conference. She has recently assumed leadership for the Theatre portion of the College of Law-Theatre interdisciplinary collaboration for professional education.

Joe Goldberg, MD, MBA graduated from the Western Reserve University College of Medicine. He trained at Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital and Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in pediatrics. Following his service during the Vietnam War he practiced in Cleveland for many years. He served as a Medical Director for a hospital system in Cleveland, Kaiser Permanente in Cleveland and Kansas City and a clinic in Champaign. Following his retirement he joined the faculty at the College of Medicine where he serves in a number of roles.

C. K. Gunsalus, J.D., is a nationally recognized expert on research integrity, whistleblowing, ethics, and professionalism in academia. She serves as Special Counsel in the Office of University Counsel and Adjunct Professor in the Colleges of Law, Medicine and Business. She has spent the last several years developing innovative approaches to professional education involving interdisciplinary collaboration. She and Professor Michael Loui of the College of Engineering have an NSF grant to assess the efficacy of role playing/simulation techniques for teaching research ethics.

James Kumar, MD, MS is the Associate Director of Internal Medicine Residency Program at the College of Medicine and an Internal Medicine physician at Carle Foundation Hospital. He is also a clinical instructor for the first year course Fundamental Clinical Problems, and served as a Chief Resident at the Carle Foundation Hospital. He is an active member of the American College of Physicians and Society of Hospital Medicine. He research on inpatient diabetes research is published in peer reviewed journals and presented in various scientific meetings across the country.