

Brief Encounters with the Taos Institute

September 2016

This month our guest is Katherine Gergen Barnett, MD. She will be a keynote speaker at our upcoming conference – Nov. 10-12.



Katherine shares with us some of her thought on **Relational Practices in Health and Healthcare: Healing through Collaboration.**

What does relational health and healthcare mean to you?

Health in healthcare cannot happen without the power of the relationship. Traditionally, this has been about the connection between the provider and patient. Developing this relationship is a timeless art - one that is built on fostering curiosity, true listening, empathy, and understanding. Many of us spend our lives teaching these skills to medical students, residents and practicing doctors. However, in our increasingly complex world of medicine, relational health is beyond the matrix of the clinician- patient and spans to include relationship to other patients, relationships to other providers on the medical team, and relationships to community resources. Medicine is now moving to team based care where we have social workers, psychiatrists, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, practice assistants, nurses, patient navigators and care management members on our teams. Each of these individuals serves a critical role in bringing a patient to health. Group medical visits give a chance for patients to connect to others suffering from the same conditions and those relationships are part of their healing. Finally, health is created and strengthened when individuals are connected to resources within their community- getting locally sources foods at CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) , exercising at the local Y, walking on safe sidewalks, biking in safe bike lanes, having safe affordable child care, etc. Healthcare is moving in a very exciting direction where increasingly we are getting government incentives to turn health care delivery in a much more relational way. This is what gets me excited every day in the work at Boston Medical Center, New England's largest safety net hospital.

Can you share an example?

See the Integrative Medicine Group Visits paper. ([Click here](#)). Also happy to share more!

What's is one practice that you think could transform the future of healthcare?

Group medical visits and, if I had to name another, greater utilizations of community health workers.

How might we spread the ideas and practices of relational health and healthcare?

It is incredibly exciting to have the Taos Institute focusing on Relational Practices in Healthcare in their upcoming conference. Part of what needs to be done is better communications across all sectors - Community health Workers, social workers, nursing, community organizers, doctors, etc. so that we can be in greater dialogue about what each of us is doing in the field of relational health (using language so that each sector can better understand what this means). So many of us are moving in the same direction but are working in siloes. If we all got on the same page and actually starting building on each other's work and dialoguing, we could move the field of health forward at greater leaps and bounds. After all, no healing can be done outside of the context of relationships.

Visit: www.relationalhealthcare.org and www.taosinstitute.net/speakers-and-presenters