Thank you so very much for the honor of being asked to speak to you as you commence your careers in the health sciences. As I began to work on this talk, I remembered the really good and the really awful commencement addresses that I have heard. Commencement address invitations are an academic extreme sport. Will this audience of graduates, their parents, distinguished faculty and donors get to enjoy a speaker who has something witty and thought-provoking to say or do they get to watch the spectacle of a geezer wiping out in an avalanche of clichés and sentimentality? Sit back. Keep score.

On that note, now you know why I changed the title of this address from “Guarding the Trust” to “Don’t Take Breaks in the Staff Lounge.”

In 43 AD, physician and pharmacologist Scribonius Largus wrote that a career in the healing professions began with the act of professing in which one solemnly dedicated one’s work to mercy and humanity. Today, two thousand years later, every person who relies on your research, diagnosis or treatment, every patient and thus every one of your loved ones and even you, as a future patient, wants to believe that a promise of mercy and humanity undergirds the healing enterprise.

[This version is derived from the translation of von Staden H. J Hist Med Allied Sci 1996;51:406 and the analysis of its cultural meaning in Miles S. The Hippocratic Oath and the Ethics of Medicine, Oxford University Press, 2004. I deleted the passage, “I will not cut, and certainly not those suffering from stone, but I will cede [this] to men [who are] practitioners of this activity,” because it was probably inserted centuries after the 500 BC writing of the Oath.]

By Steven Miles, MD

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Hippocratic Oath: A 2007 Vernacular Version*

I swear by human grief at the mortality of our loved ones, by the family of healers, by all manner of treatments and by health itself to fulfill this oath according to my power and judgment; and to respect those who have taught me this art and to support the institutions of health education, and to esteem those who aspire to become healers as my brothers and sisters and to share the facts, theories and methods of the healing sciences with them.

I will use treatments for the benefit of the ill in accordance with my ability and my judgment but from what is to their harm or injustice I will keep them. I will not assist with murder nor will I assist such endeavors. I will not endanger a woman in pregnancy.

In a pure and holy way I will guard my life and my art.

To each clinical encounter, I will go for the benefit of the ill and I will refrain from unjustly treating them, especially from sexual acts with my patients or their relatives. I will remain silent about the private things that I see or hear regardless of whether I learn of them during treatment or in broader conversations, if I honor this oath and do not evade its spirit or violate it, may I enjoy the benefits of life and of this profession and be respected by all. If I transgress, the opposite be my lot.

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This idea of the trustworthy healer guarantees all the other principles of health science ethics. If we are not trustworthy, all of clinical ethics, including respect for autonomy or beneficence or justice, and all of research ethics, its demands for truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth are simply bad checks.

The value of trustworthiness undergirds the work of all of us: physician’s assistants, physicians, therapists and those who research or produce medical drugs and technologies.

It is easy to condemn those who betray a patient for the cardinal vices of greed, laziness, lust, envy or pride. No one will rise to support the cancer researcher who falsifies records to validate and promote his cure; the physician’s assistant who sexually abuses a nursing home resident; the doctor who leaves a patient under anesthesia on the operating room table to cash a paycheck before his bank closes; or the nurse who induces cardiac arrest so she can save her patients with CPR.

However, a Commencement Day promise to refrain from such acts is hardly an ethical “big deal.”

It is a much more challenging big deal to keep the patient’s interest first when we have multiple responsibilities and when somebody important says that we should balance the patient’s well being with some other competing goal. In ethics, we call this the dual loyalty problem. Dual loyalty in ethics is a big deal.

Who could possibly ask for such a balancing when by extension it also asks us to accept that our own loved ones’ well being—even our well being as a future patient—would also legitimately be placed onto such a scale? Recent headlines tell us who.

• There were the doctors and bioengineers at a company who knew that there was a faulty electrical part in their pacemaker. Death reports came in. The problem was easily fixed. They made a new pacemaker but did not tell their customers or the government of the problem while they sold out their remaining inventory of tens of thousands of defective pacemakers. Finally, a young man, of an age to take a place on this podium, unexpectedly died and the corrupted balancing was revealed.

• There were the researchers who worked for a drug company that was promoting a drug for minor pain. Their research showed that the drug increased the chance of risk of having a heart attack or stroke. They submitted papers for prestigious journals that did not report the side effects—the drug looked like good news. Tens of thousands of people died. Many more were disabled.

• There were the pharmacologists and doctors who decided that a health plan would not cover an advance in cancer therapy that had been validated in a new well designed study. They decided that the plan would not ask for “compassionate use” approval while the Food and Drug Administration completed its general approval. The doctors in that plan did not appeal the denial. They did not even inform their patients of this advance. The patients went without.

• There were the therapists and physician’s assistants who watched wounded veterans get inadequate rehabilitation for injuries acquired in war. They kept quiet until the families, our neighbors, took it to the media and to Congress.

Each patient, each person who receives a medicine or a medical device, relies on our trustworthiness. They expect that we have not put our desire for more money, more time or a promotion ahead of their well being. They expect us to at least have the courage to be inconvenienced.

Such trustworthiness safeguards healthcare institutions as well. Those institutions work better if they respond to a sometimes unwelcome voice of health professionalism.

• The pacemaker and drug company were severely damaged by the go-along behavior and collapse of patient-respecting professionalism by their pharmacologists, biomedical engineers, physicians, and researchers.

• The reputation and finances of a health plan is put at risk by clubby staff committees that deny validated therapies and by physicians who are too lazy or self-important to appeal a denial of service claim that is based on out of date science.

• The therapists who silently allowed injured veterans to get inadequate rehabilitation betrayed the mission of military veterans’ health care organizations, our country’s sacred promise to our veterans, and harmed our nation’s ability to recruit soldiers for our national defense.

• The military medical personnel who silently watched prisoners be abused at Abu Ghraib and
who concealed deaths by torture in Iraq and Afghanistan damaged our country’s reputation, our moral authority and standards to which we appeal in order to protect POWs and friends of democracy around the world.

The Greeks wrote about this dual loyalties problem 2500 years ago. They were obsessed with the dilemmas that arose when personal virtue conflicted with expedient citizenship or when self interest conflicted with the public good.

They knew that trustworthiness was not a go-with-the-flow kind of thing; that it required the courage to be inconvenienced and then some. That is why the Hippocratic Oath says, “I will guard my life and my art.” But how do we do this guarding? The answer is not easy or obvious. If it were, fewer people would get tripped up in such problems. Here, I could probably end with a shopworn platitude. The Google corporate motto, “Don’t be evil,” works nicely. But I do not want to wipeout in the extreme sport of commencement addressing. So, three final points.

• Cynicism is the opposite of trustworthiness.
• Be the kind of person who would be welcomed, not simply respected, at your patient’s funeral.
• Don’t take breaks in the staff lounge.

Your chairs are hard, I will be brief.

• Cynicism is the opposite of trustworthiness. At best, a cynic is a machine—more often, he or she is a menace. A healer with a jaded negativity about people or healthcare institutions cannot listen or console. They cannot safeguard patient advocacy against improper bureaucratic pressures. Guard against cynicism with gardens, music and most of all intimacy and friends.
• Be the kind of person who would be welcomed, not simply respected, at your patient’s funeral. Do not confuse the general respect for healers with affection for you as an advisor in difficult times. White lab coats and blue scrubs are cool but costumes cannot establish your identity as a person of mercy and humanity. It is the person behind the scrubs who is welcomed into the intimate circles where birth and love and fear and death are celebrated and grieved.
• Don’t take breaks in the staff lounge. Accessibility is accountability. Eat where patients’ families hang out. Get your beverages and read your newspapers in the lobby. This way, anybody whose call you have not returned will grab you. Unspoken questions will be asked. A child that you have never seen before will tell you that the real name of that 75 year old female with aspiration pneumonia is “grandma.”

2500 years ago, a new kind of health profession was invented. It rested on two ideas.

• Medicine is a natural science.
• Healing is a moral enterprise.

Back then, when therapists, midwives, doctors, nutritionists and pharmacologists were one profession, the center of their most remarkable text acknowledged the greatest challenge to the science and ethics of healing with a simple promise, “In a pure and holy way, I will guard my life and my art.”

My very best wishes to each of you.

University of Minnesota – “Mini Bioethics School”

Have you always wanted to learn more about bioethics, including topics such as ethics and organ transplantation, reproductive technologies, stem cell research, and decision making at the end of life? Then Mini Bioethics School is for you!

This three week course is taught by Center for Bioethics faculty and hosted by the Center’s Director, Jeffrey Kahn.

Fall 2007 course dates are Tuesdays, 11/13, 11/20, 11/27 from 6–8:00 pm on the University of Minnesota campus. Registration for the three classes is $45 and will be available on line beginning late August. For more information, visit www.ahc.umn.edu/outreach/minimed/.
Center News

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Bioethics and The Human Rights Center have created a comprehensive archive of 60,000 pages of government documents describing medical operations in U.S. prisoner of war facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay (Cuba). The archive will allow scholars, journalists, policymakers and interested citizens to study and understand the medical operations in these prisons. The project, organized by Steven Miles, MD, can be accessed at: www1.umn.edu/humanrts/OathBetrayed/index.html.

Barbara Elliott, PhD, has been awarded an Outstanding Community Service Award by the University of Minnesota. The award, established in 1999 by President Bruininks, honors members of the University community who have devoted their time and talent to make substantial and enduring contributions to improve public life and the well-being of society.

Carl Elliott, MD, PhD, has been awarded an International Visiting Research Fellowship, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney, August 2007.

Rosalie Kane, PhD, has been awarded the University of Minnesota Distinguished Women Scholars Award in Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Spring 2007.

Bonnie Leroy, MS, and Dianne Bartels, RN, MA PhD, have been awarded a grant from the University’s Consortium on Law, Value, & the Life Sciences for a project on “Positive Exposure: Reframing Perceptions of Genetic Disease and Disability.”

Steven Miles, MD, has been awarded the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2006 George Orwell Award for distinguished contribution to honesty and clarity in public language.

David Satin, MD, has been appointed to the Family Medicine Clinical Service Unit (CSU) Board of Governors as the Department’s Compliance Officer, Department of Family Medicine University of Minnesota Medical School.

John Song, MD, MPH, MAT, has been awarded the Early Distinguished Career Award from the Medical Alumni Society, University of Minnesota.

Maryam Valapour, MD, has been appointed to the American Thoracic Society Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest; appointed to the National Lung Review Board, United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS); and appointed Chair, Research Committee, LifeSource Upper Midwest Organ Procurement Organization.

Center for Bioethics Collaborates on Development of an Ethical Framework for Influenza Pandemic

The Center for Bioethics has joined with The Minnesota Center for Health Care Ethics on a project funded by the Minnesota Department of Health to develop an ethical framework for allocating essential health care resources during a severe influenza pandemic. To accomplish the goal, the project will recruit a broad-based panel of experts and stakeholders to outline the framework and develop recommendations for its implementation. The proposed framework will balance the competing priorities of caring for the sick, preventing spread of the illness, and maintaining critical social systems and economic activities. Professor Jeffrey Kahn said, “These are not easy issues, and we appreciate the investment of the Department of Health in efforts to address some of the critical and pressing ethical questions that will arise in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak. We look forward to working with a diverse group of experts and stakeholders on these issues.”
The Center for Bioethics was awarded a $900,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for a three year research project to improve expression of end of life preferences for homeless people. The goal of the study is to determine whether homeless people will write an advance directive, whether assistance of a social worker will increase the rate of completion and most importantly, whether this process will actually change what occurs when a homeless person is hospitalized or dies. Principal Investigators John Song, Edward Ratner, Dianne Bartels, Center for Bioethics; and Melanie Wall, Division of Biostatistics, School of Public Health will conduct the study, which will include participation by 300 homeless people living in Hennepin County.

The investigators have learned from five years of previous research* that homeless people are especially interested in completing a legal document of some kind to ensure that their wishes are communicated. The study will implement a unique health care directive to address the concerns of homeless people.

*Previous research was funded by: Edwards Memorial Trust; Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment and Life Sciences, University of Minnesota; and the National Institute for Nursing Research, National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Muriel Bebeau, PhD, Receives Achievement Award by the American College of Dentists

The work of Muriel Bebeau, PhD, has been honored by the American College of Dentists, the oldest national honorary organization for dentistry. The Regents of the College announced that Dr. Bebeau will receive the 2007 Upper Midwest Section Achievement Award for outstanding activities in promoting “excellence, ethics, professionalism, and leadership in dentistry” at the annual meeting in September 2007.

Dr. Bebeau has been a leader in professional ethics education, especially in dental education for 27 years. Her work is distinguished by being grounded in an empirically validated theory of professional development, recruiting honored Fellows from the American College of Dentists to lead small groups of students in formatted discussions of real world dental ethics and by her attention to measurable outcomes. First year dentistry students take “Professional Problem Solving;” third and fourth year students take “Ethical Decision-Making.”

More than 2,000 students have benefited from this course of instruction. The course work centers on common ethical dilemmas for which students must prioritize personal and professional values, develop a morally defensible course of action and articulate a practical and effective action plan.

Dr. Bebeau is Professor, Department of Primary Dental Care, University of Minnesota School of Dentistry; Honorary Fellow, American College of Dentists; Faculty Associate, Center for Bioethics; and Director, Center for the Study of Ethical Development, Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.
**Fall 2007 Bioethics Seminars**

*Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit available*

The Center for Bioethics provides a range of opportunities for faculty, students, staff and the public to learn about the most cutting edge issues in bioethics through its annual seminar series. Seminars are held from 12:15 to 1:30 pm in Mayo 3-125 on the University of Minnesota campus. Previous seminars may be accessed in BREEZE format at [www.bioethics.umn.edu](http://www.bioethics.umn.edu).

The 2007 fall schedule follows:

**SEPT 21**

“Bioethics and the Tragedy of the Commons,” by Steven Miles, MD, Professor, Center for Bioethics; and Department of Medicine, University of Minnesota Medical School.

**OCT 12**

To be announced

**Nov 9**

To be announced

**DEC 14**

“Title to be announced” by Elizabeth Seaquist, MD, Professor, Division of Endocrinology and Diabetes, Department of Medicine; Director, General Clinical Research Center; Pennock Family Chair in Diabetes Research, University of Minnesota.

Center seminars have been designated to meet University of Minnesota continuing medical education requirements and provide 1 contact hour in continuing education (.1 CME) for each seminar. Registration is required if you are attending for CME credit.

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**Hold the Dates**

**OCT 9–11, 2007**

**The Oscar M. Ruebhausen Visiting Professorship in Bioethics**

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Bioethics and Consortium on Law and Values in the Health, Environment & Life Sciences, and Department of Medicine Program in Professional Bioethics, Mayo Clinic Rochester will host a presentation by Zach W. Hall, PhD, “Stem Cell Research: At the Intersection of Science, Politics, Law, and Culture.”

A neuroscientist and the first leader of California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), Dr. Hall will discuss his experience in managing the political maelstrom of stem cell research in California, exploring the challenges of controversial science and the role of bioethics in contemporary political culture. Dr. Hall was formerly Director of the University of Southern California (USC) Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute; Senior Associate Dean for Academic Development in the Keck School of Medicine; Vice Chancellor, University of California, San Francisco; and Director, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), NIH.

Registration is required to receive continuing education credits (CEU, CLE, CME). For information visit [www.bioethics.umn.edu/zachhall](http://www.bioethics.umn.edu/zachhall).

**APR 24-25, 2008**

**Positive Exposure: Reframing Perceptions of Genetic Disease and Disability**

The University of Minnesota's Institute for Human Genetics and the Center for Bioethics will present a program focusing on the unique perspective of people with disabilities. The program will include a panel and audience discussion, followed by a reception and exhibit of photographs by Rick Guidotti, founder of Positive Exposure (highlighting photographs of people with differences). Positive Exposure encourages participants to ask questions such as: What does a genetic disease look like? How do we define disability? How do we form our perceptions of disease and disability? What do others see when they see someone ‘affected’ with a disease or disability?

The program on April 24 is open to the public. The program on April 25 is open to University of Minnesota students and faculty with a special focus on disability issues. For more information, contact the Center for Bioethics at 612-624-9440 or email bioethx@umn.edu.
**Calendar of Events**

**Aug 17**  
Carl Elliott, MD, PhD, will speak on “Guinea Pigs of the World, Unite!” at the University of Sydney, Center for Values, Ethics and Law in Medicine, Sydney, Australia. For information, visit http://www.usyd.edu.au/.

**Aug 23**  
Steven Miles, MD, will speak on “Values and Decisions for the End of Life,” “Health Care Reform: Rationing, Blame, Directions,” and “The Rationing of Health Care” at St. Joseph’s Medical Center Community Health Symposium, Baxter, MN. For information, call 218-828-7624.

**Sept 18**  
David Satin, MD, will speak on “Ethical Issues in Physician Reimbursement” at the Student Committee on Bioethics (CHIP) Lecture Series, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. For information, visit www.chip.umn.edu.

**Oct 9-11**  
10/9–Zach W. Hall, PhD, will speak on “Stem Cell Research: At the Intersection of Science, Politics, Law, and Culture” at Coffman Theater, University of Minnesota. 10/10–Professor Hall will speak at Geffen Auditorium, Mayo Clinic Rochester. 10/11–Professor Hall will speak at University Center Rochester. For information, visit http://www.bioethics.umn.edu/ZachHall.

**Oct 14-16**  
“A Summit of Sages” conference sponsored by the Katharine J. Densford International Center for Nursing Leadership, University of Minnesota School of Nursing, St. Paul, MN. Guest speakers include: Dr. Maya Angelou, John Howe III, MD, and Jean Watson, PhD, RN, FAAN. For information, visit www.nursing.umn.edu/Densford.

**Oct 16**  
Muriel Bebeau, PhD, will speak on “Can Ethics Be Taught?” at the University of Florida School of Dentistry, Gainesville, FL. For information, call 612-625-5138.

**Oct 18**  
David Satin, MD, will speak on “Multidisciplinary Teams are Needed to Evaluate Adverse Effects of Pay for Performance” at the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) Annual Meeting, Washington, DC. For information, visit www.asbh.org.

**Oct 23-27**  
Barbara Koenig, PhD, will speak on “DNA as Unique Identifier: Privacy, Trust, and the Future of Genomic Biorepositories” at the American Society of Human Genetics Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA. For information, visit http://genetics.faseb.org/genetics/ashg/menu-annmeet.shtml.

**Oct 25**  
Steven Miles, MD, will speak on “Oath Betrayed” at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis, MN. For information, call 612-927-8849.

**Oct 26**  
Steven Miles, MD, will be a keynote speaker at “Putting the Patient First, Cooperation in Crisis” at the American Medical Students Association Regional Conference, Rochester, MN. For information, visit http://www.amsa.org/region/8conf.cfm.

**Oct 30**  
Dianne Bartels, RN, MA, PhD, will speak on “Ethical Issues in Pay for Performance” at the Ramsey Medical Society, Council on Professionalism and Ethics, Minneapolis, MN. For information, call 651-414-2862.

**Nov 16**  
David Satin, MD, will speak on “Ethical Issues in Pay for Performance” at the Ramsey Medical Society, Council on Professionalism and Ethics, Minneapolis, MN. For information, call 612-624-9440.

**Nov 17**  
Muriel Bebeau, PhD, will speak on “Linking Professionalism with Ethical Capacities” at the “Association for Moral Education” Annual Meeting, New York University, New York, NY. For information, call 612-625-5138.

**Recent Faculty Publications**

**Book Chapters**


**Articles**


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Recent Faculty Publications

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