The 2021 Health Humanities Consortium International Conference will explore the theme “Crisis and Community: The Role of Health Humanities,” March 25-27, 2021, at the Hershey Lodge, Hershey, PA. Hosted by Penn State College of Medicine.

COVID-19 has created a global crisis. Broad restrictive changes to ordinary life have been imposed in almost all countries. In the U.S., existing social inequities have become more salient as poor people and people of color are suffering disproportionately. Education moved online and faculty quickly retooled. Medical schools pulled students out of the clinical setting. Some 4th-year students graduated early to help in hard hit areas. Amidst the pandemic’s upheavals, many in the health humanities are asking, “What is our role?”

The pandemic has sharpened the decades-old debate about the purpose of humanities in medicine. Hershey, PA, is an opportune place to explore this question. Penn State College of Medicine has incorporated humanities into medical education for over 50 years. In spring 2021, we will explore the contributions of health humanities to health crises and imagine the future of the humanities during recovery and renewal.

We invite presentations considering the role of health humanities and

- pandemic pedagogies, ethics, imaginaries, technologies, and rhetorics
- social responsibility and social justice, including issues of blame and stigma
- expressive arts and the human condition in times of crisis
- duty to care and duty to treat
- moral injury to health professionals
- present and future communities
- health systems and human systems
- medical education
- navigating truth in times of crisis
- other topics we have not yet imagined

We anticipate questions about the viability of an in-person conference. We are planning for it, with the caveat that we do not know what the situation will be in March 2021. Any changes to conference format or venue will be made in the context of national, state, and local guidelines, closer to the date of the conference. We ask members of the health humanities community to share our hope and submit forward-thinking proposals in the spirit of uncertain times. AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™ will be offered.

Formats include individual papers (15 minutes), panels and workshops (3-4 papers or continuous presentation by a group, 90 minutes), flash presentations (5 minutes), artistic and/or media presentations (15 minutes), or choose your own adventure presentations (surprise us).

Please send a 250-word proposal abstract with contact information (name, affiliation, email address) to HealthHum2021@psu.edu by September 15, 2020. Notification of acceptance by early November 2020. Questions to Bernice Hausman, Chair of the Department of Humanities, Penn State College of Medicine, bhausman1@pennstatehealth.psu.edu.