



the medical center hour

Medicine & Society in Conversation

A program of the Center for Health Humanities and Ethics
University of Virginia School of Medicine

Wednesday, 24 March 2021

12:00-1:00 pm

A Zoom Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87684988960> Passcode: 763749

Edward W. Hook Memorial Lecture in Medicine and the Arts // Medicine Grand Rounds

STAYING HUMAN IN MEDICINE: THE DANGER OF ISOLATION AND THE POWER OF GOOD CONNECTION

Samuel Shem MD PhD

Professor of Medicine in Medical Humanities and Professor of Psychiatry, Grossman School of Medicine, New York University, New York NY, and author, *The House of God* and *Man's 4th Best Hospital*

Marcia Day Childress PhD, moderator

Physician-writer Samuel Shem's iconic black humor-laced novel, *The House of God* (1978), written while he was a resident, was an exposé of medicine's often-heartless training culture at the time. The book became unofficial required reading for generations of persons going into medicine. His most recent novel, *Man's 4th Best Hospital* (2020), appeared when clinician morale was low, burnout rampant, and physician suicide on the rise; if anything, the COVID pandemic has exacerbated these conditions. In this Hook Lecture, Shem discusses how his books arose out of perceived injustice to take the measure of medicine's culture, and how he has used fiction both to resist injustice and to call upon doctors, nurses, and others to reclaim their once-humane calling.

Co-presented with the Department of Medicine and with generous support from the School of Medicine's Anderson Lectures

Suggested resources

1. Samuel Shem. *The House of God*. Berkley, 1978, reissued 2010
2. Samuel Shem. *The Spirit of the Place*. Berkley, 2012
3. Samuel Shem. *Man's 4th Best Hospital*. Berkley, 2020
4. Samuel Shem. Fiction as resistance. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2002; 137: 935-937
5. Stephen Bergman. Basch unbound—*The House of God* and fiction as resistance at 40. *JAMA* 2019; 322(6): 486-487

Find Samuel Shem's books on UVA Bookstore's Medical Center Hour page:

https://uvabookstores.com/shop_product_list.asp?catalog_group_id=MTcx&catalog_group_name=RVZFTIQgQk9PS1M&catalog_id=3162&catalog_name=TWVkaWNhbCBDZW50ZXIqSG91cg

Samuel Shem MD PhD graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard, took a PhD at the University of Oxford, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar; and received his MD with honors from Harvard Medical School. At present, he is professor of medicine in medical humanities and professor of psychiatry at New York University's Grossman School of Medicine. Shem is best known as a novelist, playwright, and activist. His first novel, *The*

House of God, was written during his residency and changed how American medicine, and American medical training, was viewed, inside and out. The book has had major influence and was unofficial required reading for persons contemplating a career in medicine. In 2020, *The House of God* was on the *Washington Post's* list of "12 novels that have changed our lives"—Shem was the only living author on the list. In 2016, *Publishers Weekly's* list of "the 10 best satires of all time" had *The House of God* #2, sandwiched between #1 *Don Quixote* and #3 *Catch-22*. In 2019, an MDLinx vote by doctors naming the profession's 10 most influential books put *The House of God* at #1, followed by Harrison's *Internal Medicine* (#2), and *The Bible* (#3). In 2020, Shem published *Man's 4th Best Hospital* as a sequel to *The House of God*. As Sanjay Gupta MD noted in a review, "Shem has done it again. *Man's 4th* is an instant classic. You may get pissed off, double over in laughter, and even cry a little. If you read one medical drama, make it this one." Other of Shem's novels include *The Spirit of the Place* (2012), which won two American best-novel awards; *Mount Misery*, and *At the Heart of the Universe*. His *Annals of Internal Medicine* essay, "Fiction as Resistance," is a classic. Together with Dr. Janet Surrey, Shem has written *Bill W and Dr. Bob*, an award-winning Off-Broadway play about the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous; a novel, *The Buddha's Wife*; and a nonfiction book, *We Have to Talk: Healing Dialogues Between Women and Men*. Shem has been a scholar/artist at the American Academy of Rome.

Dr. Shem declared no personal/professional relationships with commercial entities producing healthcare goods and/or services related to this presentation. Medical Center Hour planning group members M.D. Childress PhD; R.J. Bonnie LLB; R. Carpenter DrNP; J.F. Childress PhD; M.F. Marshall PhD; J. Mutter MD MA; K. Reid PhD RN FNP-C CNL; L. Shepherd JD have no personal/professional relationships with commercial entities producing healthcare goods and/or services, while R. Dillingham MD MPH reports interests with Gilead and Warm Health Technology Inc. UVA Office of Continuing Medical Education faculty and staff have no personal/professional financial relationships with commercial entities producing healthcare goods and/or services.

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Medical Center Hour is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, see Center for Health Humanities and Ethics: <https://med.virginia.edu/biomedical-ethics/medical-center-hour/>
Watch Medical Center Hour recordings at <http://www.youtube.com/uvamch>

In support of improving patient care, the University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team. This activity was planned by and for the healthcare team, and learners will receive 1 Interprofessional Continuing Education (IPCE) credit/session for learning and change.

How to Claim Continuing Education (CE) Credit for Medical Center Hour:

Using the Google Chrome or Firefox browser on a phone, tablet, or computer, go to <https://cmetracker.net/UVA> and log into your CE account with your email and password. Choose 'CE Certificate-Eval for Credit,' enter Activity Code **140404**, then complete and submit your evaluation. You have 30 days from this program date (24 March 2021) to evaluate and obtain credit for this program. This is the only way you can receive credit for this Medical Center Hour.

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Learning objectives:

1. Appreciate the place and power of fiction to portray and resist injustice in medicine.
2. Consider ways that the humanities and arts can help health professionals stay healthy even as they resist and seek to reform the systems in which they work.