

Kern National Network For Caring and Character in Medicine

Caring in Medicine

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Professionalism in Medicine
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KERN INSTITUTE
FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEDICAL EDUCATION



Caring in Medicine

The good physician knows his patients through and through, and his knowledge is bought dearly. Time, sympathy and understanding must be lavishly dispensed, but the reward is to be found in that personal bond which forms the greatest satisfaction of the practice of medicine. One of the essential qualities of the clinician is interest in humanity, for the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient.

Frances Peabody, The care of the patient. JAMA 1927.
88 (12):877-882.

Ethics of Care

- Rooted in feminist theory: Virginia Held, Joan Tronto , others
- Care has been relegated to the private sphere of society, peripheral to public concerns
- Care-giving work has been devalued: done by women, especially those of color.
- Care receiving has been stigmatized.

KNN Descriptive Definition of Caring (Evolving)

- ***Care embraces a blend of practices, dispositions and motivations all aimed at ensuring that individuals and populations grow, develop and flourish as best they can.***
- Situated in the context of relationships; built on acceptance of interdependence
- Acknowledges inherent power imbalances; eschews dominance and seeks humility
- Trust is a precondition and is also generated in a reinforcing loop.
- Not necessarily altruistic; mutually beneficial and rewarding.
- Standards and aspirational qualities are embedded; care practitioners strive to continually improve their efforts.

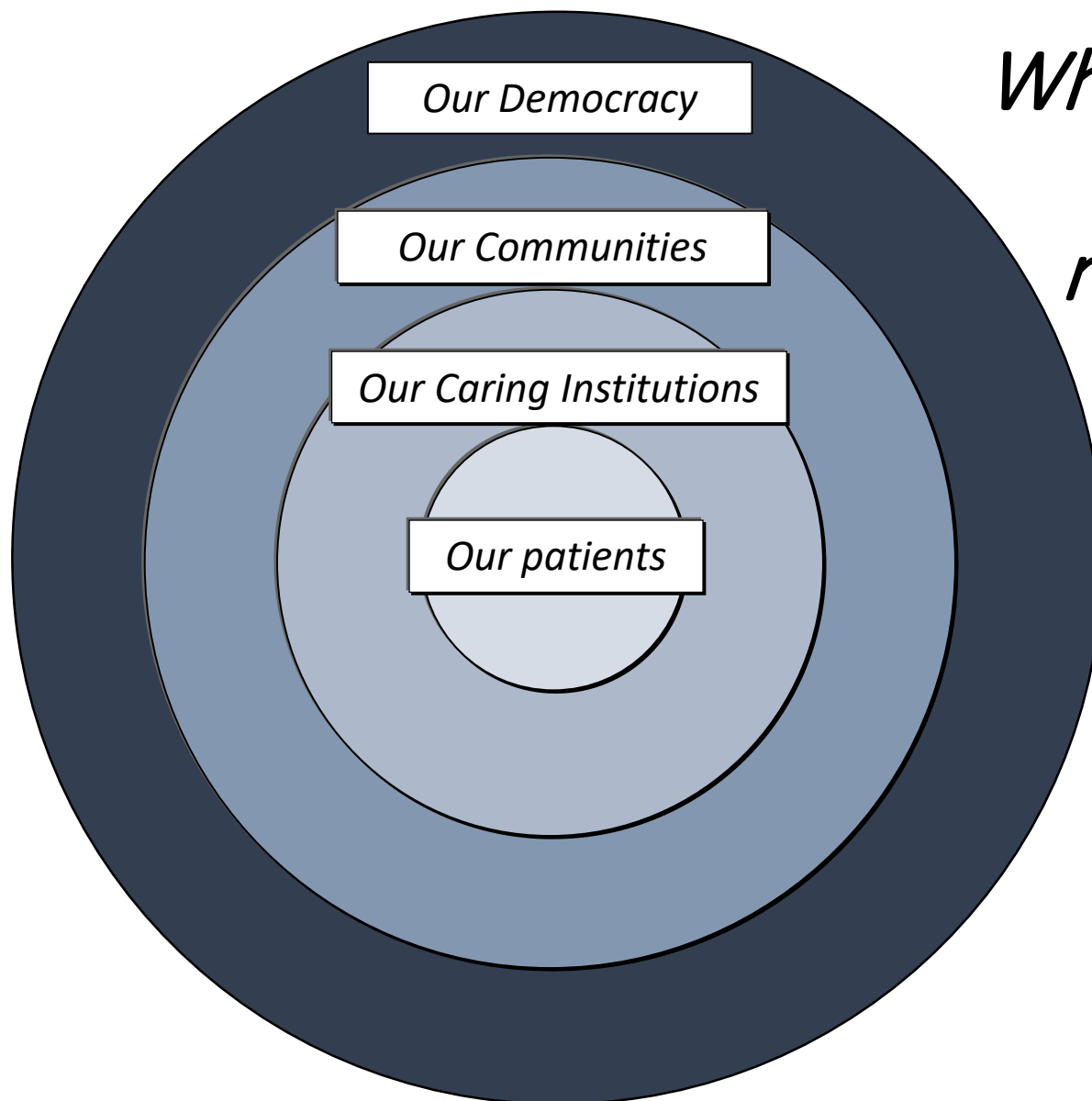
Caring as a Practice

Five phases of care have corresponding moral elements.

Caring about	→	Attentiveness
Taking care of	→	Responsibility
Care-giving	→	Competence
Care-receiving	→	Responsiveness
Caring with	→	Commitment to democratic principles

*Adapted from Tronto, Moral Boundaries, Caring
Democracy*

*If medicine is a
caring
profession....*



*What is the scope of
its caring
responsibilities?*