

John Dossetor
Health Ethics
Centre



HEALTH ETHICS SEMINAR

2026-
2027
SERIES

What Does Meaning in Healthcare Mean?



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Thursday, 29 October 2026

12:00 - 13:00 MDT

ONLINE via Zoom application

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Neuroscientists are fond of describing the brain as a "meaning-making machine". In clinical medicine, meaning lies at the core of patient experience. No one would likely deny that there is a particular subjective experience of receiving a diagnosis or enduring a course of treatment or dying from an illness. But the extent to which this process of meaning-making is relevant (or not) to the team treating the patient is widely variable. In this presentation, I will discuss two relevant issues: (1) whether and why specific teams include patient meaning-making as part of a therapeutic treatment plan. And (2) how the creation of a new class of drugs and therapy is waging war over the role of meaning in medicine and whether this question lies at the heart of medicine itself.

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