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An occasional newsletter for the Emeritus Faculty Association

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Emeritus Faculty Association News April 2016

Next Meeting: Friday, April 1, 10:30 a.m. in the **Chemistry building, room 412.**
Our speaker will be John Coulehan, MD, MPH, FACP. His presentation will be titled
“Ethics in Medicine: An Evolution of Aspirations.”

Please save the date for our Annual May Luncheon on **May 13th at noon, SAC
Ballroom B.** Invitations to follow.

Bio: Jack Coulehan is an Emeritus Professor of Preventive Medicine and Medicine at Stony Brook and former Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics. Jack's poems and stories appear frequently in medical journals and literary magazines, and are widely anthologized. His books include *The Medical Interview: Mastering Skills for Clinical Practice*; *Chekhov's Doctors*, stories about medicine; and five collections of poetry. In 2012 he received the American College of Physicians' Nicholas Davies' Award for “outstanding lifetime contributions to humanism in medicine.”

Abstract: From ancient times the medical profession has promulgated ethical codes of practice. Codes and commentaries often specify what kind of person the physician ought to be, as well as how he should behave. While codes arising in Eastern and Western cultures share many characteristics, I will focus on the evolution of professional ethics in the Western world from 500 BCE to the present, identifying four sequential stages of development: Hippocratic, Religious, Enlightenment, and Biomedical Ethics. In each case the newer stage re-interpreted and expanded an earlier stage, until contemporary Biomedical Ethics developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Biomedical Ethics took the radical new approach of focusing on general ethical principles, applicable to both physician and patient, rather than being grounded exclusively on professional values, virtues, and duties. While this development was necessary to meet ethical challenges posed by new medical technology, as well as human rights movements, it also had two unintended negative consequences. First, since ethical principles have often served as the basis for health care law (court decisions and statutes), physicians began to concentrate on legal requirements rather than ethical requirements in their decisions. Second, the tradition of professional ethics, which emphasized physician character and virtue, began to decline rapidly and by the late 1990s caused major concern in the medical profession. Since then, numerous educational initiatives—the “professionalism” movement—have attempted to restore the traditional ethos of medicine.

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