

**CFP—11th International Symposium
The Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine
and 2024 Hippocrates Awards**

Centro de Servicios Universitarios de Avilés | University of Oviedo | May 23-24, 2024

In her celebrated essay ‘On Being Ill’ Virginia Woolf contended that the English language, though rich in adjectives to explain emotional distress, ‘at once runs dry’ when it comes to describing illness and physical pain. Her argument about the inaccuracy of language to deal with health-related issues has been further developed by philosopher Elaine Scarry, among others, who maintains that the ‘unshareability’ of physical pain, i.e., its ‘resistance to language’, is a plausible explanation for its generalised absence from socio-cultural representations. However, it has been argued that poetry—with its employment of rhetorical strategies like metaphorisation, simile, alliteration, anaphora, and the breaking of the line—is particularly well equipped to talk about illness and physical infirmity and provides a language where there seemed to be none.

There is now a solid body of work on medical poetry, i.e., poetry that deals with medical issues. Anthologies like *The Poetry Cure* (eds. Julia Darling and Cynthia Fuller, 2004), *Signs and Humours* (ed. Lavinia Greenlaw, 2007), *Poetry in Medicine* (ed. Michael Salcman, 2015), and *Illness as Inspiration* (Theodore Dalrymple, 2019), to mention but a few, prove that poetry is well suited to compensate for the inability of literal language to deal with pain. Though these anthologies are all quite recent, the poems included span several centuries and showcase the socio-cultural dimension of pathologies across time. All in all, poetry is now generally perceived as a valuable vehicle to express pain and to connect us with the experience of illness by means of its figurative language and conceptual strategies. However, and in spite of growing initiatives to incorporate poetry as a therapeutic tool in different medical areas, comparatively little research has been done on the curative and/or healing power of poetry for patients in a clinical context.

We invite proposals for talks, discussion panels, poster sessions and poetry readings that address the interaction between Poetry and Medicine from either literary or scientific perspectives, and from any historical or contemporary period. Bearing in mind that our conference is eminently interdisciplinary, cross-fertilisation between the Humanities and the Sciences is particularly welcome. Topics may include, but are not restricted to:

- The exploration of diverse pathologies through poetic language
- The pathologies of extinction (ecological grief and trauma) in poetic discourse
- Illness in crisis areas: beyond war metaphors?
- Gender issues in medical poetry
- Poetry as therapy: its potential and its limitations
- Poetry in the education and training of health professionals
- Poetry as an aid to health professionals
- The place of poetry within the Medical Humanities
- The translation of medical poetry
- The doctor’s perspective, the patient’s perspective: gaps and bridges

Confirmed Keynote Speaker:

Alan Bleakley

author of *Thinking with Metaphors in Medicine* (Routledge, 2017)

co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Medicine and Poetry* (Routledge, 2024)

Please submit abstracts of up to 400 words (and up to 5 references, if appropriate) to heal@uniovi.es by 22 February for 20-minute oral presentations and 10-minute poster presentations. Authors will be notified within 10 days.

The 11th annual International Symposium of the Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine is being held as a partnership between the Hippocrates Initiative and the research group “HEAL: Health, Environment, Arts and Literature” at the University of Oviedo, and will include the 2024 Hippocrates Award ceremony. The Symposium will combine its academic programme with sessions dedicated to poetry readings and performance. Information on invited poets and artists, and on registration dates and accommodation options, will be available in due course on the HEAL website: www.unioviedo.es/heal, in a section specifically designed for the Symposium.

Please direct enquiries to heal@uniovi.es

For information on the Hippocrates Awards and the Hippocrates Initiative:
www.hippocrates-poetry.org

Sincerely,

Luz Mar González-Arias

Symposium Director

President of the Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine

PR of HEAL

ORGANIZAN



COLABORAN



Symposium Director

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