Re-covering the Communicative Power of Touch in Healthcare
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Rationale
Touch is a major component of nonverbal communication and a foundational part of everyday clinical practice, be it shaking a patient's hand, the intimacy of a physical examination, or performing procedures. Like all communicative practices however, how healthcare professionals touch and interact with patients is influenced by personal experience, culture, family life, education and the varying contexts of professional practice¹. Increasingly, touch is becoming risky², contested, even controversial, as advanced industrialized nations move towards becoming ‘no touch societies’³. Perhaps due to its intimate and challenging nature, touch as a primal and primary form of communication, is rarely the subject of specific enquiry in medicine leading to a rudimentary understanding of touch as both a communication process and form of knowledge in medicine. The aim of this workshop is to re-engage our senses and experience of touch, as a concept and experience in care and communication. Our goal is re-imagine touch in healthcare, have some fun, and provoke discussion amongst healthcare professionals.

Learning objectives
Engage and discuss experiences and the importance of touch in clinical practice
Use interactive exercises to re-imagine touch in clinical practice
Create innovative methods for encouraging the use of touch in educating healthcare professionals and clinical practice

Methods:
Introductions, learning objectives and overview (10 minutes)
Engaging Touch: reflection and discussion (pairs, then large group) of touch in healthcare, stimulated by poetry (20 minutes). In particular, inter-professional discussion will be encouraged.
Re-imagining touch in clinical practice:
Adopting a phenomenological⁴ perspective, participants will focus on the tactile/haptic experiences of a health-professional’s day-to-day activities by means of ‘hands-on’ activities. We will ‘make the familiar strange’⁵ and use contrasting embodied senses (dance, taste) to facilitate articulating a descriptive account of our touch experiences (30 mins).
Create innovative methods for encouraging touch in healthcare education and clinical practice (30 minutes)
Participants will discuss the relevance of touch exercises in education and clinical practice, including sharing ideas, concerns and expectations in their individual contexts. Implications for future work, research and healthcare education will conclude the workshop.

Teaching materials: poetry, music, sweets, writing prompts, art-materials, hand gel

Evaluation: Participants will reflect on their workshop experience both in guided written formats and verbally in discussion.

² Field T. Touch. Boston;MIT press, 2014
⁵ Kumagai AK, Wear D. “Making strange”: A Role for the Humanities in Medical Education. Academic Medicine 2014; 89: 973-77