

Balint

Michael Balint was an Hungarian psycho- analyst, who in the mid 50's began running case discussion groups with doctors in Tavistock Square. The aim was to look at the Dr – patient relationship. Doctors were encouraged to analyse what feelings are generated in themselves, as this may represent what the patient feels. The presenter often takes on the role of the presenter and the group that of the Dr. The aim is not to make a diagnosis but to understand the process better.

Aims of Balint group:

1. Allow us to handle difficult patients more easily
2. Develop a variety of styles with the patient rather than maintaining same style
3. Step back from consultation and analyse meaning behind their requests
4. Critically analyses the process of the consultation with emphasis on the Dr's own response to the patients' behaviour.
5. Exhibit non-judgemental response to the patients behaviour

Helpful questions to ask are: -

What was the patient's **actual** reason for coming that day?

How did you feel when you saw patients name on your list?

What kind of thoughts and feelings did you have during the consultation?

Are there any other patients, who make you feel this way?

Focus on the doctor patient relationship and not the medical management

Characteristics of effective Balint group leadership

The leaders will:

- Try to keep the discussion centered on the doctor patient relationship
- Discourage too much interrogation of the presenting doctor.
- Encourage people to express their own thoughts and feelings about what they have heard.
- Protect group members from unwelcome intrusions on their privacy or criticism which is hurtful without being helpful.
- Represent the patient if he/she is in danger of being ignored.

Famous Phrases of Michael Balint

“The drug ‘doctor’” (ie the doctor herself/himself is a powerful medication)

“The collusion of anonymity” (patients may bounce from one specialist to another with nobody taking responsibility for the patient as a person)

“The courage of one's stupidity” (Go on, say it, you may be absolutely right and if you are not, we will probably still talk to you)

“The mutual investment fund” (All the shared experience and trust that doctor and patient accumulate over many years in general practice)

“The doctor's apostolic function” The doctor's tendency to have unrealistic expectatons of the patient based on the doctor's own values. ('You should give up alcohol. I never touch it')

“Sometimes your patients have to hit you over the head before you take any notice of them.”