**The Family Connection**

The focus of this "Family Connection" presentation might be a patient and their family or it might be about your own reaction to the patient and/or their family. Identify a "stressor" to find a topic. Thinking about the Family Connection provides an opportunity to explore, with the patient, the meaning of their illness for themselves and their family, rather than limiting the discussion to the allopathic medicine understanding of the disease. Thinking about and understanding the family connection may help health care providers:

- …understand how differences in culture can be a barrier or an asset to providing primary care, (i.e., the impact of cultural/family health care beliefs on health care seeking and adherence behavior, as well as the impact of different beliefs of the health care provider).
- …identify alternative techniques for data collection and processing when the patient’s culture differs from yours.
- …understand when and how to perform a family assessment.
- …match community resources with patient and family needs.
- …integrate findings from assessment of the family into patient management.
- …incorporate family issues into patient education.
- …appreciate the influence of personal upbringing and lifestyle on how the medical student or physician views disease, patients, and patient families.

The following provides “rules”, terms, or definitions that may help to define the family/patient dynamics - [http://www.med.und.nodak.edu/familymedicine/clerkship/documents/TheFamilyConnection.doc](http://www.med.und.nodak.edu/familymedicine/clerkship/documents/TheFamilyConnection.doc) This document is a compilation of thoughts medical personnel have observed regarding how individuals and families interact. A genogram or family map may aid your discussion about interactional patterns in the patient’s system, and how those patterns will affect and effect ultimate health outcomes. As you collect and consider patient-centered information, consider issues like family rules (expressed or unexpressed), interdependence, boundaries, and triangulation, and how those issues impact the patient’s health and health seeking behaviors.