

Dr. Marnina Norys



Tell us about your role at Humber.

As Humber's Clinical and Organizational Ethicist, my job is very diverse. I help to vet policy, offer consultations to healthcare providers, patients or families dealing with ethical dilemmas on the units, and sit on a variety of committees. As the only one in this role at Humber, another big part of my job is to build ethics capacity, meaning I help cultivate everyone's ability to recognize and manage ethical issues on their own. To this end, I provide education, which includes presentations at Skills Days, Clinical Practice Leader Meetings and Staff Orientation. I also host a monthly Ethics Forum, where any interested parties come together and discuss hard cases, and produce a monthly Ethics Bulletin that is distributed hospital-wide.

Tell us about your academic journey.

My undergraduate degree is in Philosophy. Back then, I was only interested in the philosophy of mind, philosophy of science and cognitive science. However, while pursuing my Master's Degree at the University of Western Ontario, I met a Professor who consulted as a Bioethicist at a local hospital, who helped ignite my interest in moral philosophy. From there, I conducted my Doctoral Thesis at York University and decided to conduct a moral ethnography of the everyday ethics of a group of health care professionals who provide mental health care services to people in the community. This group is also known as an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team. In retrospect, the path I took during my PhD should not have been all that surprising given my mother was a Nurse and my father a Psychiatrist.

How has your academic journey contributed to your professional growth?

Studying moral philosophy has been valuable for my career. Looking at issues through the lenses of a variety of different moral theories helps one to appreciate and build bridges between differing viewpoints in moral disagreements. However, while writing my dissertation and observing the ACT team, I realized that sitting on the sidelines, merely critiquing what happens in healthcare was not for me. Having the opportunity to support healthcare workers doing such important, yet challenging, work is more meaningful to me. Working as a Clinical Ethicist allows me to roll up my sleeves, as it were, and collaborate with individuals doing jobs for which I hold the highest regard.

What advice do you have for those furthering their academics while maintaining a full-time career?

Never underestimate the value of your hands-on experience to inform your academic studies. Theory and practice are inextricably linked, and neither have much value without the other. If you are working full time while going to school, the process may feel slow, but in the long run, you will gain a richer and fuller appreciation of what it is that you are studying.