

## Humor as a communication tool in healthcare (HATCH)

---



### Meet the Trainer



**Assoc. Prof. Michaela Kostičová, MD, PhD, MPH**, is Head of the Institute of Social Medicine and Medical Ethics at the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Bratislava. She is a medical doctor, public health researcher and educator whose work focuses on social determinants of health, adolescent sleep and well-being, gender-based violence, and evidence-based research methodology. She contributes to international research collaborations, participates in the WHO-supported HBSC (Health Behavior in School-aged Children) study, and serves as Secretary of the Evidence-Based Research Network. Beyond academia, she is actively engaged in community healthcare, providing services through a mobile clinic for people experiencing homelessness. In this course, she connects scientific evidence with practical experience and thoughtful reflection. She believes that high-quality healthcare requires both analytical thinking and human connection and that appropriate, sensitive humor has positive effects on health, well-being, and relationships. Outside her professional life, she recharges by travelling, scuba diving, and skiing with her family.



**Ján Štvrtina, MD, PhD**, current employment: assistant at the Institute of Social Medicine and Medical Ethics at the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Bratislava. He is a medical doctor and holds a PhD in General History, with research focus on symbolism. In addition to symbolic studies, his scholarly interests include Eastern philosophical and mystical systems, as well as aspects of holistic medicine. He has published several academic articles and monographs in these areas. Within this course, he focuses on wellbeing and various pathways to achieving it—one of which is humor. He also explores how wellbeing

can be effective.



**Annelie Drakman, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University in Sweden. She was the PI of the three-year research project "Joy in Science – The Use of Positive Emotions in Autobiographies by Nobel Laureates in Physics", analyzing the use of joyous emotions in self-narratives by prominent scientists in the twentieth and twenty-first century. In 2022, she created the course "The History of Joy", given at Stockholm University, attracting the largest

number of students for a newly created course in the history of the university. She has been invited to teach and lecture at Harvard University, Colby University, and seven universities across Sweden. In 2018, she was awarded her doctorate in the history of science and ideas from Uppsala university, defending a dissertation on nineteenth century medical practices. Her dissertation was awarded a national prize for best historical work in 2018, and articles from it were awarded in international essay contests, arranged by *Medical History* (Cambridge University Press) and the *American Association for the History of Medicine*. Within this course, she focuses on the how positive emotion, moods and states has been understood to affect health outcomes from a historical perspective.



**Anna-Lena Everman**, freelance - actress who worked nationwide in Sweden since –97 and as a hospital - clown since –01 (Stockholm and Uppsala) *Education*: 3 years at the Swedish National Academy of Mime and Acting (Stockholm). 6 months of Clown at the Swedish National Academy of Mime and Ag (Stockholm). Workshop in Clown at École Philippe Gaullier, London. Within this course we will explore how to develop your inner silly side and explore the different situations that can arise in the meeting in hospital setting.



**Nicklas Lindgren**, is an actor, hospital clown and artistic leader for Clownjouren Uppsala. He is also working in theatres in Stockholm. Education: 3 years at the Swedish National Academy of Mime and Acting, Stockholm 1993–96

2 years at The Commedia school, Copenhagen 1990–1992

I am working professionally as an actor since 1996 -

As Hospital clown in Uppsala and Stockholm since 1999 -

In this course we explore what kind of humor you have and how to use it in your daily work. It is not about how to be a clown and funny all the time, but more about connecting and creating a situation that can bring joy in meeting with others.



**and. med. Nils Fiebig, B.Sc.**, is a medical student at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and member in the Leadership committee of the Teddybär Krankenhaus Göttingen (Teddy Bear Hospital, a volunteer group of medical students). He is also a licensed EMT with a specialization in pediatric care and intends to pursue a career as a pediatrician after completing medical school. With respect to his leadership at the Teddy Bear Hospital, he coordinates a team of volunteer medical students with the goal of reducing stress and anxiety in children related to medical appointments and hospital visits. Prior to beginning his medical studies, he graduated from the University of Stuttgart with a degree in aerospace engineering. Apart from his studies, he works as an EMT in a regional ambulance service and serves as an officer in the German Red Cross and the German Lifesaving Association. There, he also trains volunteers in emergency medical procedures and is an active member of civil protection and disaster response units. In this course, he offers insight into the unique needs of pediatric patients and highlights the Teddy Bear Hospital's efforts to teach children in a playful and engaging way, what to expect during medical care.



**Pavel Mihalák**, Artistic Director of the Slovak Červený Nos Clowndoctors, lecturer, and senior coach with over 30 years of experience in performing arts. His diverse background spans from puppet theater and drama to musicals and music, culminating in his discovery of modern healthcare clowning as a powerful artistic expression. Since 2010, Pavel has been a key figure within the Red Noses International network. As a member of the "Emergency Smile" pilot team, he has led humanitarian missions in crisis zones across Cameroon, Greece, and Ukraine, collaborating with organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Today, he serves as an international trainer, preparing professional teams for high-stakes missions worldwide. Pavel currently leads a team of 70 healthcare clowns and is the lead instructor for the "Humor in Healthcare" program. Drawing on 16 years of specialized education at the International School of Humor in Vienna, he teaches medical professionals how to use humor as a strategic communication tool to break taboos, ease trauma, and improve interaction with patients and colleagues. His

workshops offer a professional yet lighthearted perspective on how humor serves as a vital pillar of both patient care and mental resilience in modern healthcare. The online lecture introduces the basic principles of using humor in healthcare settings. Participants will learn key humor theories, simple improvisation techniques, and practical ways to bring more lightness and connection into their work with patients. The program combines short exercises, real-life examples, and space for questions. The onsite workshop is more empirical, our common "study" and tries of a theoretical point of view on humor theories, simple improvisation techniques, and practical ways to bring more lightness and connection into the work with patients, colleagues and ourselves.



**Milan Chalmovský** studied acting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Children in hospitals have been meeting him as professional healthcare clown since 2005. In addition to medical clowning in children's wards, he also participates in special programs such as Laughter Knows No Age, Circus Paciento, We Have Slippers, Clowning for Adult Hospitalized Patients, and the program To the Operating Room, for which he is also artistically responsible. In addition, he is a coach for medical clowns and a lecturer in the educational program for medical staff Humor as a Communication Tool in Healthcare. Milan

is an officially certified clown who has performed more than 2,000 clown shows in hospitals. Milan brings the topic of humor in healthcare and the importance of cooperation between medical clowns and hospital staff to various medical conferences, workshops, and seminars. He is a guest performer in various plays. The performances in which he participates can be seen, for example, at A4 – nultý priester, Divadlo DPOH, and Divadlo Malá scéna. He currently works mainly at the SkRat theater as an actor and co-author. The onsite workshop is more empirical, our common "study" and tries of a theoretical point of view on humor theories, simple improvisation techniques, and practical ways to bring more lightness and connection into the work with patients, colleagues and ourselves.



**Adriana Mattos, PhD.** Adriana Mattos, PhD, is currently a lecturer and cluster coordinator in Health, Life Sciences & Neurosciences at University College Groningen, University of Groningen (the Netherlands). She is a biologist and holds a PhD in Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Her academic work is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach that integrates science education in non-formal spaces and addresses themes such as citizenship and democratic practices, social justice, diversity and inclusion. A

central focus of her teaching is the design and facilitation of international virtual exchange (VE) initiatives, connecting students across countries and disciplines to collaboratively explore complex health and societal challenges. Over the past years, she co-taught was the "Arts in Health" at UCG, where students engaged with artistic practices as a means to reflect on illness, wellbeing, empathy, and healthcare experiences. Through this work, she promotes dialogue between science and the arts as complementary ways of understanding health and human experience. Her broader pedagogical interests

include intercultural learning, student-centered education, and the use of creative and reflective methods to support critical thinking and professional development in health-related fields. Within this course, she contributes by reflecting on how the arts—and humor as one of its expressions—can support wellbeing, humanize healthcare, and contribute to positive health outcomes.