

Balint Group or Balint Seminar Many types of groups used in residency training have been called Balint groups and are not. The Balint group, an unique and specific type of group case discussion, properly framed and conducted over time by a trained leader will often result in participants' increased ability to empathize with their patients and to use their doctor patient interaction as a valuable diagnostic and therapeutic tool. A wonderful additional benefit is the humanization of medicine for the doctor and patient and an antidote to physician burnout. The references and resources below are chosen to help residency faculty understand the Balint group process, describe it to participants and other faculty, sell it to administration, access leader training and appreciate the importance of obtaining such training, avoid problems that undermine Balint groups' success and stay the course. Several very helpful ones are not published per se or are hard to find in print but may be accessed through the websites of the American, British and Australian Balint Society websites, links provided.

Books: Prices in parenthesis are quoted as list price and lowest available price at Amazon.com. If you are an STFM member, please use the STFM Amazon portal at the bottom left of the STFM home page at <http://www.stfm.org>

*THE Book is- Balint, M. (1971). *The doctor, his patient and the illness*, 2nd edition. London, UK: Surrey Pitman Paperbacks. Also published by International Universities Press, Inc. New York, 1988. (\$72.-\$83)

- This book is dense to read and sometimes hard to come by, but the introduction to Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 are worth it. What it is all about and how to lead, from the horse's mouth.

Salinsky, J., Sackin, P. (2000). *What are you feeling, doctor? Identifying and avoiding defensive patterns in the consultation*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Radcliffe Press. (\$45-\$64)

- Examples from a real practice on why self-awareness in the doctor patient relationship is so important with reference to Balint groups as a way to learn it.

Articles:

*The Balint Society (2003). *Balint Groups and the Balint Method*. Salinsky, J. Available on the Australian Balint Society website. click [HERE](#)

- A lucid, cogent overview of the history, method, leadership requirements, group process and potential outcomes of Balint groups by a master leader.

The Balint Society (1994). *Essential and Desirable Characteristics of a Balint Group*. compiled by Paul Sackin. Available on the (British) Balint Society website. click [HERE](#)

- Helps to define the essential ingredients that make a Balint group work and discriminate it from other group training exercises.

Scheingold, L. (1988). Balint work in England: Lessons for American family medicine. *Journal of Family Practice*; vol 26, (3), 315-320.

- Classic article elaborating how Balint groups are conducted and led, and why they are worthwhile training for family physicians in the US.

Ornstein, P. (1977). The family physician as a “therapeutic instrument.” *The Journal of Family Practice*, Vol. 4, (4), 659-61.

- Family physicians would be best served by training that doesn’t teach them psychiatry or psychotherapy but which helps them develop their own interpersonal skills, specifically empathy, listening and self-awareness.

Brock, C and Salinsky, J. (1993). Empathy: An essential skill for understanding the physician-patient relationship in clinical practice. *Family Medicine*, vol. 25, 245-8.

- Making a good case for why the skill of empathy makes for better doctors and how Balint groups can help train doctors to use empathy in practice.

Freedly, J. (2006). Professional identity development and the psychotherapeutic function of a residency Balint group. *Journal of the Balint Society*, vol. 34, 16-21. (attached)

- Description of the personal/professional changes experienced by a participant in a Balint group. Provides insight into residents' sometimes troubling behavior toward the group exercise.

Lichtenstein, A., Lustig, M. (2006). Integrating intuition and reasoning: How Balint groups can help medical decision making, *Australian Family Physician*, vol. 35. (12), 987-989. Available on the Australian Balint Society website. click **HERE**

- Making a good case for how Balint group training makes doctors better, not just more empathic.

Brock, C. (1985). Balint group leadership by a family physician in a residency program, *Family Medicine*, vol.17, 61-3.

- How to set up, run and evaluate Balint groups in residency training with special emphasis on the requirements of leadership.

Milberg, L. (1993). Some random thoughts about Balint-group pitfalls, pratfalls and pot-holes. *Journal of the Balint Society*, vol 21, 17-18. Click **HERE**

- How not to set up, run, evaluate and integrate Balint groups into Family Medicine Residency training. Some process, leadership and systems issues that sink Balint groups.

Johnson, A., Nease, D., Milberg, L., Addison, R. (2004). Essential characteristics of effective Balint group leadership. *Family Medicine*, vol. 36 (4):253-9. Click **HERE**

- Report of research isolating essential Balint leadership skills.

Kjeldmand, D., Hoemstrom, I., Rosenqvist, U. (2004) Baint training makes GPs thrive better in their job. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 55, 230-235.

- Qualitative research that documents the alleviation of isolation physicians experience when they participate in a Balint group. Good to provide the article to administrators to bolster claims about the process and to show that Balint is an accepted activity for practicing physicians in other countries.

Handouts: The American Balint Society. (2007). *What To Expect as a Member of a Balint Group*. Available on the American Balint Society website/resources. click **HERE**

- A handout for new participants explaining what happens in Balint groups and how to participate.

Margo, G. and Margo, K. *Balint groups vs support groups*. Available on the American Balint Society website/resources. click **HERE**

- A handout explaining the differences between two groups that are often confused and mistakenly blended in residency programs.

*The American Balint Society. *Balint Groups and ACGME Competencies*. Found under resources on the American Balint Society website. click **HERE**

- A delineation of how many of the RRC required competencies are met by Balint groups in residency training. Essential reading for program directors

On-line Resources: The American Balint Society (ABS) website (<http://americanbalintsociety.org>) has; 1) a section on resources and links to seminal articles. 2) a section on where to get leadership training click **HERE** 3) a section listing other Balint Societies with links to:

The Australian Balint Society www.balintaustralia.org The Australian Balint Society has a list of resources that includes an extensive annotated bibliography and is worth checking out.

The (British) Balint Society balint.co.uk/

References considered Classics noted by *

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