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Balint groups

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Balint groups are named after the British psychoanalyst, Michael Balint, who began offering 'research cum training' seminars to general practitioners in London in the 1950s. The aim was to help them with the psychological aspects of their practice. The early work of the seminars was described in an influential book called *The Doctor, his Patient and the Illness* (1957). The groups consist of 8-10 doctors with a group leader (or sometimes two). A Balint group meeting starts with a doctor gives a detailed presentation of a patient who has been preoccupying her for whatever reason. The group then discusses the case with emphasis on the emotional content of the doctor- patient relationship. The discussion is guided by the group leader. The aim is to encourage empathy and hence understanding rather than to provide solutions. The usual ground rules for group safety and confidentiality apply and leaders have to have training and accreditation from their national Balint Society.