Designing and Implementing a Health Humanities Longitudinal MS4 Elective

Innovative Changes Incorporated in the Medical and/or Nursing School Curricula to Increase Humanism

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Background

Humanities in Medical Education

- Use of humanities content in American medical education has been debated for well over 60 years.
- Medical humanities remains a curricular orphan, unable to find a lasting home in medical education & training.
- Its inclusion remains unstandardized
- Barriers to the integration of humanities include time and space in an already overburdened curriculum
- Lack of consensus on the exact content, pedagogy and instruction.

The Health Humanities (HH)

- Focuses on the ways we absorb, interpret, and respond to stories in literature and other forms of art, offering a model centered on physicians’ relationships with their patients, colleagues, society, & themselves.
- Students need skills to support resilience & maintain their ability to connect with patients and other health professionals, while also taking care of themselves.
- Even though a degree of consensus exists that HH needs to be (re)introduced into medical education, the question still arises as to how?

Intervention

I. Course Objectives

1. Synthesize clinical experiences into coherent narratives by creating written reflections.
2. Cultivate compassion, empathy & respect for diverse social & cultural perspectives, while sharing patient stories.
3. Collaborate and communicate effectively as part of a supportive peer group.
4. Practice written reflection as a sustainable method to promote personal & professional development & to foster resilience.

II. Course Logistics

- Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: A Longitudinal Elective in Health Humanities for MS4 Students
  - 20 required sessions from June until March
  - 2 hours face to face at a central location or remotely.

III. Diverse Faculty

- Physicians (MD/DO)
- Chaplains
- Nurse Practitioners (NP)
- EdD/Ph.D
- Art Educator

IV. Course Content

- Art / Museum
- Music
- Poetry
- Stories
- TED talks
- Graphic Novels
- Books

Results

Maslach Burnout Inventory Scale (N=25, 2 cohorts)

- Medical Humanities Pre and Post MBI 2017-2019
  - Emotional Exhaustion
  - De-Personalization
  - Personal Accomplishment

Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (N=25, 2 cohorts)

- Medical Humanities Pre and Post MBI 2017-2019
  - Resilience

Goal

To develop student’s capacities for continuous reflection & improvement by creating a community of practice for the learners and faculty.

Through the Lens of Health Humanities readings, visual arts, music and reflective writing. Students will:

- Honor patients’ stories by seeking to understand their perspectives about the impact of illness on their lives.
- Practice effective communication skills by building and sharing coherent narratives.
- Work to locate themselves within their own stories and those of others, students will learn to more effectively process their clinical experiences and practice reflections as a skill for meaning-making and self-understanding throughout their careers.

Student Evaluation

“Stated Expectations Met” - 100% (N=25) YES

Overall Course Rating: 4.5/5

Faculty Evaluation

Did this course meet faculty expectations?

YES (N=9)

Conclusion

- Longitudinal electives are successful in final year if flexible with all logistics
- Faculty form a special interest group (SIG) focused on HH
- Faculty with this interest will volunteer time & effort to join
- Health Humanities (HH) can frame learning specific to health, illness & professional identity formation.

Take Away Message

A Health Humanities Elective in final year of medical school can influence GME and CPD based on students’ positive experience and outcomes