

The Arts in the Education of Medical Learners*Palliative Care Physician Believes Arts Provide Insight Into Human Condition*

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As a palliative care physician for over 10 years now, my experiences in working with individuals who are embarking on the final stages of life's journey, as well as with their families, has highlighted the need for the art and the science of medicine. A holistic approach that requires attention to the physical, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual/existential dimensions of a person's illness requires an openness to the human experience which is not taught in the traditional training of health care providers, and many studies illustrate important deficiencies particularly in medicine. This holistic approach, based on relationship-centred care, can facilitate healing even in a person with terminal illness.

The arts can serve as a doorway through which one can pass to explore different cultures, traditions and ways of knowing. The arts can serve as a medium for a "shared humanity of creativity in connection" (McIntyre, 2004, p. 260). The arts are experiential, engaging senses, feelings and emotions as well as cognitive functions. The arts provide a forum where individuals can share perspectives and learn to appreciate the richness that diversity offers to our understanding of any given situation. The arts provide insight into the human condition.

As an educator, the arts have become part of my educational philosophy. The arts are integrated into learning activities I use across the educational spectrum – from pre-licensure students to those in post-graduate programs and continuing professional development activities as well as in interprofessional learning settings. For example, since 2002, I have had the honour of working with colleagues from nursing and spiritual care in the elective course at the University of Ottawa called "Death Made Visible". In this course, students from medicine, nursing, spiritual care and health sciences read and discuss short stories, novels and poems that reflect on issues of death, dying, care and teamwork, and discuss excerpts from films as well as art work. In collaboration with the Department of Theatre, we have also used interactive theatre as an experiential learning activity in a variety of settings: with new medical students; with palliative care practitioners in continuing professional development; with faculty and educators in a faculty development session. In a research project, we used the humanities to help learners provide holistic care during their clinical placements and to help them better understand the interprofessional health care team. All the learning activities which incorporate the arts have required the learners to reflect, and respond to the art. All the learning activities which incorporate the arts have required the learners to reflect, and respond to the art. The arts bring active and imaginative exercises to the learner, and encourage the learner to "try on" and develop an appreciation for the perspectives of others.

The arts offer rich learning experiences to all involved in health care and deepen our understanding of ourselves as individuals, as well as our appreciation of the human experience. The art of medicine is as important as the science of medicine – it is this balance that leads to

healing. Those living with illness and their families require this holistic and relationship-centred approach to care, and we must be ready to provide it. The arts are at the core of this learning.

Reference:

Maura McIntyre. Chapter 22: Ethics and Aesthetics: The Goodness of Arts-informed Research, in *Provoked by Art: Theorizing Arts-informed Research*. Edited by: Ardra L. Cole, Lorri Neilsen, J. Gary Knowles, and Teresa (Tracy) C. Luciani. Volume 2 Arts-informed Inquiry Series. Publisher: Backalong Book and Centre for Arts-informed Research, Halifax NS 2004.

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