Arts in Medicine: A Worthwhile Pursuit?
Examining the role of humanities in medical education

Dr. Yelena Zavalishina, M.D., CCFP
November 11, 2016

The Face behind the illness
Yushen Qian, Christopher Chapman and Molly Chapman

"Can I see another’s woe And not be in sorrow too? Can I see another’s grief And not seek for kind relief?"

William Blake

Introduction

• "Medical Humanities", coined in 1976
• “Where there is love for humanity there is also love for art” - Hippocrates
• Role of painting, music, literature and other forms of art in medicine

Fundamental Flaw of Medical Education

Students “start out on cadavers” and most of their patients “wind up as cadavers”.
- “Ethical erosion”
- Empathy decline (Bertman et al)

How do we show the human face of medicine?

Empathy

“The ability to understand and share the feelings of another".

How would you like it if the mouse did that to you?
**Objectives**

1. To examine the prevalence of arts based curriculum in medical education
2. To determine short term and long term effects of art programs on medical learners

**Methodology**

- Literature review
- Search: MEDLINE, PUBMED, OVID, PSYCHINFO, BIOSIS with Boolean operators
- GRID tool
- Critical appraisal checklist for qualitative studies.

**Results**

- Seventy eight articles analyzed for review

**Perspective and Descriptive Studies**

- 51 studies reviewed
- Majority in favour
- One study disputes utility
- Focus on literature, art, music, drama and film

**Qualitative Studies**

- Twenty six studies

**Four categories:**
- Theme identification
- Utility rating
- Long term impact
- Other

**Qualitative Studies**

**Long term impact**

- Traditional pathway vs new pathway graduates (Bertman et al)
- 44-item questionnaire of wellness and empathy (DiLalla et al)
Qualitative Studies

Art analysis exercise and medical student behaviours (Klugman et al)

Humanity based interventions help with tolerance of ambiguity and attention to detail

Discussion

- Majority outline a positive role of art
- Themes: empathy, tolerance, patience and creativity
- Limited by small study samples, self reported measures, lack of long term impact

Conclusion

- Positive self reported measures
- Immediate post intervention benefit
- Unknown definitive long term impact
- Need for better designed studies

References

- An evidence based perspective on greetings in medical encounters. Arch Inter Med 167:1172