Impact of Medical Humanities Education on the Personal and Professional Lives of Physicians

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Medical humanities and ethics education are an important part of medical education. The McGovern Center of Humanities and Ethics at McGovern Medical School has offered a scholarly concentration since 2007. This study aims to determine the long-term impact of the curriculum has had on graduate’s professional practice and identity. Graduates of the scholarly concentration were sent a survey asking to discuss the impact the scholarly concentration had on their post-graduate development and current clinical practice.
Introduction

- Medical education = 2 yr basic science + 2 years clinical
  - Flexner Report 1910, AMA, AAMC, LCME created standards
- 1960 = medical humanities was first introduced to U.S. medical education.
- Theory: Additional humanities and ethics education would create empathetic physicians
- Now = Majority of osteopathic and allopathic medical schools in the United States have adopted elements of humanities and ethics education
  - Think “Doctoring”
- 16 schools have dedicated scholarly concentrations/longitudinal courses dedicated to medical humanities and/or ethics education
- 2007 = McGovern Medical School the scholarly concentration was founded
This study aims to evaluate the medical humanities and ethics scholarly concentration at McGovern Medical School and its impact on graduates’ student experience and professional growth, specifically medical practice and personal well-being.
Methods

- All graduates of the MHESC from 2008-2019
- Online survey
  - Demographic questions
  - Quantitative Likert scale questions
    - Strongly Agree = 5
    - Strongly Disagree = 1
  - Qualitative free response questions
- Alumni database: 165 eligible graduates
- Anonymous, Optional
- 4 weeks, weekly reminder emails, partial responses included
Results - Qualitative

Student Experience

- Most memorable Experience?
  - “The reflective journaling that I looked back on and reminded me again of my passion [for medicine]”
  - “[It] was nice to have time dedicated to reflecting on clinical experiences ... process the chaos of third year med school. [I] learned a new way to process stress by journaling”

- 40/75 mentioned electives
- 19/75 mentioned scholarly project

Professional Growth

- Impact on current clinical practice?
  - On Patient Care
    - “I make a concerted effort to bring mindfulness into each day of work, to pause more and listen more, to be more observational and less reactionary.”
  - On Well-being
    - “I also see myself as a human deserving of care and compassion... I make choices regarding work hours and added voluntary administrative hours based on how this will affect the emotional and spiritual balance of my life”
The Medical Humanities and Ethics curriculum enriched their medical school education and the effects have continued to affect their patient care, professional identity, and personal wellbeing. Graduates continue to cultivate their individual selves to become culturally competent, ethical, and compassionate caregivers. These results support that a longitudinal scholarly concentration in the medical humanities enrich the medical education experience and nurture compassionate physicians and their clinical practice.
References


