

Global Health (Medicine) and Literature (Humanities)

Introduction

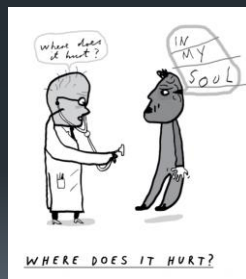
Abraham Verghese Quote

▪ *"the foremost connection is the great privilege of having an intimate view of one's fellow humans, the privilege of being there and helping at their most vulnerable moments. But also, in medicine you're taught to observe closely, you're looking for ways to synthesize things, and I think those are also useful traits."*

Relationship between medicine (Global health) and humanities (Literature)

Lets start with understanding what is Health?
Health is not just about illness and disease

It is a complex combination of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being.



What is Health?

- According to the World Health Organization a United Nation's body focused on health the definition of health is:
- *"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".*

Medicine and Global Health

- Whereas medicine is the science of healing, that deals with the practice of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and promotion of health
- global health addresses the socioeconomic, cultural, occupational, environmental and psychological factors that affects individuals and to community health problems. (Please see the expanded details in the power point on global health)
- Medicine will specifically include medications, drugs, substances used to treat and cure diseases, and to promote health,
- Global health will focus on global health concepts including:

Global Health concepts

- The determinants of health
- The measurement of health status
- The importance of culture to health
- The global burden of disease
- The key risk factors for various health problems
- The organisation and function of health systems
- (These are explained further in the power point under introduction to global health)

What is Humanities?

- Humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture.
- the study of how people process & document the human experience. They are considered subjects of learning that have mainly an emotional or cultural character (O'Connell)
- Humanities includes subjects such as philosophy, **literature**, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world.



Literature

- Goes hand in hand with practicing medicine and health care because Health care requires a combination of knowledge, human feeling and compassionate actions.
- Narrative competence in medicine (global health) allows for health providers to "*acknowledge, absorb, interpret, and act on stories and plight of others*" (Charon)
- HOW? – Health providers listen to stories (of patients), "*take all the various fragments of information and piece them together into significant message; give meaning to the messages; organize the data into temporal (chronological) narrative plot*" (O'Connell)

Why study global health and literature?

- tackle questions about what informs how (health providers) think, speak and act in relation to health, medicine, the body, healing and the human.
- It provides an avenue to bring out (enhance) empathy, care and respect for patients and appreciation for other cultures, social and economic environments
- Ultimately literature helps in understanding other's (patients) cultures, having sound cultural competence and access to knowledge of other cultures

Why study medicine and literature?

*"..through medicine, one has the great privilege of having an intimate view of one's fellow humans, the privilege of being there and helping at their most vulnerable moments.
"Also, in medicine you're taught to observe closely, you're looking for ways to synthesize things, and I think those are also useful traits for a writer. Reading has influenced so many choices and directions in my life. Reading, teaches you so much about how the world lives".*

Abraham Verghese

Narratives & empathy

Health providers practice taking the view of another person (a patient, family member, other healthcare providers)

they see the patient as a person within a family, community, and culture

Medicine vs. Global Health

- In medicine understanding literature is seen as similar to deriving meaning from medical history, physical exams, lab tests or diagnostic data. Health providers constantly formulate the patients story
- In global health providers (readers) experience new situations, explore diverse philosophies and develop empathy with respect for others who have different experiences.

Medicine vs. Global Health

- Reading about the different experiences of people who suffer from poverty, stigmatization, racism and lack of access to health helps health providers to have a holistic picture of the complex lives they live (a brief doctor's visit cannot provide for a complete picture and understanding of the health problems)
- Reading journal articles supplements and enhances the literary texts by providing background on the issues told in the stories by authors and it also provides an avenue for discussing, debating, research, interventions .

how does reading and writing relate to global health?

- Looking at the stories and linking them to journal articles about global health issues:
- allows for understanding and discussion of social determinants of health, the health of populations, and responsibilities of health care providers
- it increases empathy through understanding and appreciating alternative view points,
- encourage students and future health providers to research and study public health and work for solutions of social issues related to health

how does reading and writing relate to medicine (global health?)

- It helps (healthcare providers) to learn and listen more fully and completely to the story of the patient /s
- It facilitates the understanding and comprehension of illness and its treatment from the patient's view
- It strengthens (healthcare providers) skills in interviewing that help in creating a "strong therapeutic alliance" that includes both clinical and emotional needs.
- Create a space for health and humanities scholars to talk about medical teachings, and how to cope with human emotions

Narratives (literature) does not make health providers (Doctors, nurses, researchers, policy makers etc.) into "writers," but makes them better health care providers!

Orientations of medicine literacy

- Literary study aids health providers in four avenues or areas:
- 1. reaching and joining patients in their illness (**practitioner and patient perspective**);
- 2. recognizing self journeys through experience with medicine (**practitioner and self**);
- 3. acknowledging kinship and duties with colleagues (**practitioner and colleagues**);
- 4. providing a discourse with the public about health care (**practitioner and society**).

Articles

- Gregory J. *Lectures on the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician*. London, W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1772. Reprinted in McCullough LB (Ed.) *John Gregory's Writings on Medical Ethics and Philosophy of Medicine*. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, p. 182.
- Commentary by Jack Coulehan, M.D., M.P.H., Professor Emeritus of Preventive Medicine and Fellow, Center for Medical Humanities and Bioethics, Stony Brook University, New York What is medical humanities and why? 2008 <http://medhum.med.nyu.edu/blog/?p=100>
- Lost in translation: <http://capitalandmain.com/latest-news/issues/politics-and-government/interpreter-bill-would-help-save-lives-lost-in-translation/>