



The Jorhat Medical College
Medical Humanities Group
Newsletter



Looking Beyond Physical Healing

September 2015

PhotoSpeak



Wall painting by students on World Environment Day 2015. Educating doctors and patients through art.

Photo Credits : Hafizul I. Pathan



Dr. Abdul Halim Sarkar's Photography



Thematic Dance by Zenith Dance Group (Students of JMC) depicting agonies of mentally disabled patients



"An interdisciplinary field of Medicine which includes Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts, and their application to Medical Education. Humanities and Arts will provide insight into human condition, suffering, our responsibility to each other and offer a better perception of medical practice. On giving attention to arts and literature, we can develop our skills of observation, analysis, empathy and self reflection that are essential for human medical care."

- Dr. Anupi Das, Assistant Professor, Physiology, JMC

"The broad base to the apex of Medical Science"
- Dr. Abu Hasan Sarkar, Post Graduate Trainee, Department of Community Medicine, JMC

"The tip of the iceberg of the submerged humdrum dwellings of Medicine"
- Rhitwika Das, MBBS 3rd Year

"Keeping us humane" - Puja Bora, MBBS 4th Year

"Ensembling Art, Literature, and Music for a better cause." - Anindita Patowary, MBBS 4th Year

"The connecting link between man and medicine." - Kasturi Mudoi, MBBS 4th Year

"Is to the vowels, if Medicine is to the English alphabet" - Sampritee Gogoi, MBBS 3rd Year

"A ray of hope to awaken the thought of being human." - Shrutilekha Sharma, MBBS 3rd Year

"A path to knowledge that every student must gain." - Rima Phukan, MBBS 2nd Year

"An intersection between medicine and humanistic disciplines" - Janumoni Senapati, MBBS 2nd Year

"The tree where xylem is humanities and phloem is medicine, without which leaves (patients) are but dead ones." - Abhijit Medhi, MBBS 2nd Year

"A subject which has unrivalled potential for a great future." - Ishmita Paul, MBBS 2nd Year

"Returning to the roots of what Medicine has always been historically." - Abir Kumar Baruah, MBBS 2nd Year



Medical humanities is an upcoming quest of the human mind which celebrates the beautiful marriage of the science of medicine with the art of humanities. It is a promising subject which promotes the education and dispensation of medical knowledge through art, literature, dramatics, ethics and culture. It tries to rejuvenate the component of compassion and empathy to medical learners.

Right in the heart of the land which is both the Cultural Capital and Knowledge City of Assam, Jorhat Medical College remains true to the soil and joins hand with the worldwide noble endeavour of promoting the concept of Medical Humanities.

We are fortunate and joyous to be a part of this movement and our hopes have culminated in the organization of a Capacity Building Workshop on Medical Humanities in collaboration with University College of Medical Sciences, University of Delhi, Delhi, where we are going to dive in together to the depths of exploring this subject on 10th, 11th and 12th of September 2015. We wish to carry forward the skills and knowledge thus acquired to be passed on to our juniors and friends.

To mark the event and to share with you this good news as well as our aspirations through this endeavour, we have brought forth this newsletter. We hope it would be of immense help to you in tracing this subject.

Editors



Dear All,

I feel extremely elated as I write this and congratulate all those who have embraced this venture wholeheartedly. At this point of time when we are thinking and discussing holistic health care, Medical humanities (MH) could not have been left aloof any further. Humanities encompass diverse disciplines of literature, philosophy, ethics, history, religion, social science etc. and Medical humanities exploits the boundless horizons of arts and literature to understand the intricacies of human nature and behavior for quality health care. All the while, MH has remained a part of hidden curriculum. It's time that we bring it out of the closet and introduce into formal curriculum.



Over the three days of workshop, we shall be experiencing the twinning effect of arts and science and its impact on medical education. The facilitators shall take us through the very novel, interesting and exciting brainstorming sessions and the onus will be on us to imbibe it to the fullest, inculcate its trait onto our surrounding. We are now a part of the movement called Medical humanities and committed to the cause.

Let us hold hands and tread the path, explore the versatility and delve into the potential that the discipline of MH brings forth for us to make a new beginning, create history and contribute our bit to the Institute and the Region.

My gratitude to the Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Prof (Dr) Debajit Hazarika for his faith in us and unstinted support to hold this kind of rare and exceptional workshop, Vice-Principal Prof (Dr) Marami Dutta for her infinite blessings and magnanimous presence, my colleague- friends for their untiring support in all the endeavors MEU undertakes, our exuberant and lovely students who inspire us to invade uncharted territories by their talents, our dedicated staff for their persistent assistance and finally the Almighty for the blessings and for conspiring to have all of us here together at JMC to initiate this cause.

On behalf of MH group

Dr. Purnima Barua

Co-ordinator MEU, Jorhat Medical College



Medicine is a combination of science and arts. Quite often medical practice becomes one dimensional and the human element along with social implications are missing in the approach towards treatment of patients. Elements of humanities are missing from the core syllabus of medical science, thereby making it incomplete. The workshop scheduled to be held in Jorhat Medical College is a step in the right direction in addressing this concern. I wish for the success of this great initiative.

Prof (Dr.) B.P. Chakravarty
Director of Medical Education, Assam



Medical Humanities is a subject that makes the study of Medicine accessible through all the aesthetic senses along with the brain. Moreover it opens the physician's eyes to the greater picture of various implications that are inseparable from a diseased person, apart from the pathology: the psychology, emotions, spirituality and yet more. An artist in a doctor is the demanding need for effective healing.

It is indeed an eye-opening example set by the Medical Education Unit of Jorhat Medical College in providing the students a springboard to break free from the solely curriculum based study and view the practice of medicine in its different facets. I can't but already see an effective fruition of this endeavour. Let it infect all minds and produce awakened physicians.

Prof (Dr.) D.J. Borah
Founder Principal, Jorhat Medical College
President, Axom Sahitya Sabha



It gives me immense pleasure that the Medical Education Unit of Jorhat Medical College has made an endeavour to introduce medical humanities to the faculty and students of this Medical College. The modern day medical practice has become increasingly commercialized and that inclusion of humanities in medical education may prepare a more competent doctor in near future. However, in modern day medical practice, medical humanities have taken a back burner. The knowledge of this branch is extremely essential in the training of students as well as the faculty to guide them to search for connections between medical practice and the realities of our world. I understand that this initiative will not stop here as a onetime event and the responsibility to carry it forward will rest on the enthusiastic students and faculty.

I am also happy to state that our college in collaboration with faculty from UCMS who happens to be pioneers in this field help us to holding this event on medical humanities. I welcome Dr. Navjeevan Singh, Dr. Upreet Dhaliwal & Dr. Satendra Singh to the Cultural Capital of Assam and I wish the association goes a long way and together we all can bring in a much needed change in Medical Education.

I wish you all the best for the three days capacity building workshop and hope this will help expand your horizon as well as benefit all those around you.

Prof. (Dr.) D. Hazarika,
Principal cum Chief Superintendent,
Jorhat Medical College, Jorhat



I am extremely happy and congratulate the Medical Education Unit for taking the initiative to hold the workshop. This is one of those areas which is yet to find its due place in Medicine. It will be wonderful to observe the union of Medicine with Arts during these three days.

Jorhat has always shown excellence in both the fields of Education and Culture and has also made its place in the Guinness Book in this regard. My heart is abound with joy that Jorhat Medical College has remained true to this ideal in making a humble attempt to propogate the noble subject. My fervent hope that over time this will be an integral part of the medical curriculum.

I welcome all the Resource faculty of UCMS, Delhi to Jorhat and Jorhat Medical College. I am sure your mentoring will help them find their path and move ahead together in the same direction of progress.

My blessings to you all for a successful event.

Prof (Dr) Marami Dutta
HOD, Physiology and Vice-Principal, Jorhat Medical College

Medicine is a complex profession. It banks heavily on science as much as it does on art to provide optimum benefits to the patients. Most of the times, the teaching and training remains focused on the scientific aspects only. Many illustrious practitioners of medicine were not only expert at science but were also equally adept at the art of medicine. A large number of doctors have also made their mark as poets, writers and theater personalities. There is evidence to suggest that exposing medical students to the 'realities' of life in the form of art, theater and humanities helps to build positive attitudes towards patients and also helps to develop better communication skills.



I am happy to learn that Jorhat Medical College has taken this initiative with MEU of UCMS to highlight the importance of humanities in medical curriculum. The deliberations should go a long way in developing positive attitudes of faculty as well as students.

Prof (Dr.) Tejinder Singh
Vice Principal; Professor of Pediatrics and Medical Education;
Christian Medical College, Ludhiana 141008 India

The TORCHBEARERS



Prof (Dr.) D. Hazarika, Principal, JMC
Prof (Dr.) Marami Dutta, Vice Principal, JMC
Dr. Purnima Barua, Co-Ordinator, MEU, JMC
Dr. Navjeevan Singh, Professor, Pathology, UCMS, Delhi
Dr. Upreet Dhaliwal, Professor, Ophthalmology, UCMS, Delhi
Dr. Satendra Singh, Assistant Professor, Physiology, UCMS, Delhi
Prof (Dr.) Meghali Chaliha, Professor, Pharmacology, JMC
Dr. Runjun Doley, Assistant Professor, O&G, JMC
Dr. Pranabika Mahanta, Assistant Professor, O&G, JMC
Dr. Anuja Baruah, Assistant Professor, Community Medicine, JMC
Dr. Anupi Das, Assistant Professor, Physiology, JMC
Dr. Jolly Bhattacharjya, Assistant Professor, Physiology, JMC
Dr. Trishna Dutta, Assistant Professor, Physiology, JMC
Dr. Angshurekha Das, Demonstrator, Microbiology, JMC
Dr. Anju L. Saikia, Demonstrator, Pharmacology, JMC
Dr. Bornali Pegu, Registrar, O&G, JMC
Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahu, Demonstrator, Anatomy, JMC
Dr. Masuma Zannatul Hasina, Demonstrator, Physiology, JMC

Dr. Abu Hasan Sarkar, PGT, Community Medicine, JMC
Dr. Abhishek Agarwal, Intern, JMC
Dr. Abdul Halim Sarkar, Intern, JMC
Anindita Patowary, Student, JMC
Akankshya S. Kashyap, Student, JMC
Kasturi Mudoi, Student, JMC
Puja Bora, Student, JMC
Sampritee Gogoi, Student, JMC
Shrutilekha Sharma, Student, JMC
Nurjaman Ali, Student, JMC
Rhirwika Das, Student, JMC
Rima Phukan, Student, JMC
Dhruba Jyoti Sharma, Student, JMC
Ishmita Paul, Student, JMC
Janumoni Senapati, Student, JMC
Abir Kumar Baruah, Student, JMC
Abhijit Medhi, Student, JMC

a few thoughts

In the past doctors were placed just after God but now a days we frequently see doctors being abused by the patient party. One of the causes of this change in attitude towards doctors is probably the result of our mechanical life style where our soft, cultured and creative personality has been lost somewhere. I feel this workshop will ignite the darkened corner of our minds and will help us to become a better human being for the service of humanity.

Dr. Pranabika Mahanta Goswami

Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, JMC

Medical humanities workshop is a wonderful platform where we learn about the application of humanities, social science and arts to medical education & practice. It also helps to develop the analytical skills that permit clear thinking and lessens the complexities involved in health care.

Dr. Anju L. Saikia

Demonstrator, Department of Pharmacology, JMC

It will definitely be a new learning experience! It should help our students and us to be more self aware in dealing with patients, understanding their ailments in the perspective of their society and background.

Dr. Anuja Baruah

Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, JMC

I believe every person is born with some talent. So Medical Humanities will be a good opportunity to develop and nurture one's credibility for arts, philosophy, literature and culture with the medical profession. It will serve as a platform for better understanding of human science with all new creativities which will contribute greatly in our service to mankind.

Dr. Angshurekha Das,

Demonstrator, Department of Microbiology, JMC



How it began

The Invitation to Jorhat came out of the blue but there was no hesitation

in our minds at all - we were delighted to accept.

Our reactions

I have had friends and colleagues from Assam in childhood and later. I have often been impressed at their calm outlook, and their love for the arts and crafts. Meeting them in their own surroundings was too good an opportunity to miss.

I was thrilled because I had moderated a listserv discussion on medical humanities earlier with Dr Purnima and a workshop on the topic would be a fine way to consolidate our humanities association. I have never crossed the Brahmaputra in my life and visiting the North-East has been on my agenda for a long time. Jorhat, particularly, is special as it is the cultural capital of Assam- so what better way to learn humanities than to be at JMCH?

I was excited because it meant a trip to a part of the country I hadn't visited before; and it meant a chance to meet my ÉAIMER colleague and friend, Dr Purnima, again.

Also, Dr Satendra had heard some good things about the cultural capability of the medical students in JMCH and I was eager to meet them.

'Packing' for Jorhat

We were overwhelmed with other tasks - personal and academic and administrative - but planning for a MH workshop is relaxing because we are working with topics that rejuvenate - poetry and drama and film. It is also challenging because we have to think out of the box A LOT, something that we haven't been trained to do.

Still, we cannot go into something like this with too much planning, or create rigid structures. After all, it is all about "breaking patterns - creating change"; and about "scripting the change - changing the script".



Dr. Navjeevan Singh

Professor, Pathology and Coordinator, MEU, UCMS, Delhi



Dr. Satendra Singh

Assistant Professor, Physiology, UCMS, Delhi



Dr. Upreet Dhalwal

Professor, Ophthalmology, UCMS, Delhi

We understand that these are the two pillars of all our efforts in medical humanities.

Apprehensions

There is the niggling fear - what if nobody enjoys it? Almost immediately we brush away our apprehensions - we are going to be using comics and poetry, stories and art, theater and history - in other words, we plan to engage participants' hearts as well as their minds. When a classroom enthralls, there will be learning!

As our online, pre-workshop exchanges with the participants amply demonstrate, it would be foolhardy to assume that we are going there to "teach". We are reminded of this quote from Paulo Friere "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning".

Great Expectations

We're keeping it simple - we shall be learning to learn together.

So far and yet so close

Close because we've met our lovely, talented, eloquent participants virtually, even though Jorhat is a million miles away still.

It has been a fairly unique experience. In education, we often read about online courses, asynchronous learning, flipped classrooms, student teacher engagement, and so on. And here we are - living it, enjoying it, and looking at it in amazement.

What a group!

We look forward to meeting you in Jorhat!

WHAT IS MEDICAL HUMANITIES

Dr. Abu Hasan Sarkar, PGT, Community Medicine
Janumoni Senapati, 5th Semester MBBS student

The usual question that everyone asked me throughout the days of preparation for this workshop was "What is medical humanities?". Perhaps this question is pertinent to circulation of this newsletter too. The very phrase by Aristotle "Medicine is the art and science of healing" exemplifies the role of art in medicine. Going further to another apt quote by Decyq 'The practice of medicine is an art, not an exact science'. All the phrases ultimately translate into the simpler form that medicine is a science no doubt but the practice of medicine is essentially an art.

The basic fact lies in the simple yet potent statement that the pyramid of medical practice is broadening on its science part with gradual tapering of the humane traits. This in turn has led to the conspicuously increasing bitter doctor-patient relation amongst many other cascades of consequences. Perhaps another important consequence is the transition between the Godly image of antiquity to the businessman image of physicians in our present times. Empathy or placing ourselves in the other man's perspective is what makes us more understanding and mature in our profession.

Medical humanities tends to address this issue in a holistic manner. Everything can be acquired through exposure, motivation and practice and so is medical humanities. It tries to deliver the added effects of understanding of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, arts, science, literature, culture, painting and everything else that stoke the hibernating and latent feeling of becoming a more humane being in every human being. The road to medical graduation and further education has been designed in such a way that it nowhere directly teaches anyone to place oneself in the position of a treating patient. Thus medical humanities try to meet the unmet needs of present day medical education.

THE MIND EFFECT

Kasturi Mudoi, MBBS 4th Year

The mind and body works in sync, they say. Books have been written, research works have been done in this arena, and I dare not discuss any of that. What I intend to talk about is rather an implication of the same. PLACEBO, Latin for 'I shall please', has proved to be of great help in testing new drugs (specially in the area of Oncology), hence serving its purpose. But reflecting on the MOA of this drug(?), stirs the thought of the power of the mind playing a role in the body's capacity to heal. Having said that, it is also seen in daily life that when one constantly thinks and believes in the fact that a particular action, deed will make her better, it seems to work, how minimal or illogical that work may be. We hear of people who say that they felt better just by visiting the doctor, just by talking with her, with the touch and feeling of compassion, even

without medications; of people who go get relief of the ailment, whatever it may be, if they visit a particular doctor; people's condition becoming better when they visit a shrine!

In a world where medical science has leaped beyond the horizon of all possibilities, such instances only pave way to think that healing is multidimensional, of which, the synchronicity of the the body per se, and the mind may be an important part. Hence, this may prove to be a tool of immense potential, in the hands of the healers, if used accordingly.

N.B. - This piece does not question the essence of medicine, in any way, it only aims at putting up a random thought(if it may be called so) in the veil of technicality. The writer apologizes for any lapses on her part.

HANDLING HUMAN LIFE

Abir Kumar Baruah, MBBS 2nd Year

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"

- The Holy Bible, Genesis 1:26

Thus speaks the Bible in its very opening chapter. It explains in the most precise manner the sanctity of human life, as to why dealing with it is not in the level as dealing with animal life and why justice demands blood in return of every blood that is shed. The plain reason it puts forward is twofold: Firstly because life issues forth as a creation of God alone and secondly because God created man in His image, that man should possess some reflection of God's glory, His Intelligence, His Justice and His Morality. To destroy human life is to shatter a reflection of God's Glory.

A physician bears a very Herculean responsibility on his shoulders. He is called in a way to be a steward of human lives, well aware of his limitations, in that he cannot create life nor is that life his own possession. Thousands of novices in the profession declare every year, "I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from its beginning." How often is this oath expressed to the fullest extent in their dealing with human life?

It cannot be denied that modern science is crippled in regard to forming a firm base upon which the noble profession of medicine can meet its purpose. Crippled is science if it sees diseases just as a theatre of cytokines and a budding life as a lump of pluripotent cells that can be destroyed as one wishes and harnessed to form products. In the days of yore, African slaves were not considered human. Today, an embryo in a mother's womb is not considered human. The progress is not so apparent, is it?

Clearly it is time that we explored human life from the aspects of ethics and religion, for when simply a playwork of chemicals cannot bring forth a breathing child, why should science have the first and the last word in defining life? And if the definition of life is not wholesome, dealing with it effectively would be a far reality, even dangerous. It can be well hoped that the newfound discipline of Medical Humanities would topple down the monopoly of science over handling human life and ensure it is handled by precarious hands.

MEDICINE: HUMANITY IN PRACTICE

Phoebe Sarah Basumutary, MBBS 2nd Year

In choosing Medicine, we choose to serve and become the embodiment of what makes us humans. However, the monstrosity of medical curriculum is well known and it drives students and physicians to the breakpoint, so much so that students have little time to stop and really think and physicians have little time to interact with patients as they are engulfed in 'busyness'. Both the groups do justice to one aim, i.e. to learn and to treat patients, but patients aren't mere vessels of pathology. What about doing justice to those people who have more than just 'symptoms'. To tell about, those patients who would probably be already better if we lend our ears, smile and offer that 'wisdom we had, those patients whose health outcomes are the result of social differences, accepted as facts by the society and many other cases. To add to it, there is lessening of doctor-patient interaction time due to advent of technology. Are we on the path of becoming mechanical, apathetic physicians and deny ourselves the real satisfaction of our calling that brought us here in the first place? Medical humanities, which is not a new cry, would teach us to be of service to humans, for humans, by being the most humane of all. Quoting Sir William Osler, "The good physician treats the disease, the great physician treats the patient who has the disease." Let us be that!

MH & ME

Akankshya S. Kashyap, MBBS 4th Year

Medical Humanities, or MH as we call it nowadays. A term fairly new to me. It was first mentioned to me by my teacher who was moderating a month under this title as a part of her FAIMER fellowship programme. She sent me articles and poems at times, which I enjoyed but never delved deeper. Come August and a workshop on MH was announced. It was then when I wanted to understand it better. As for everything else nowadays, I turned to Google expectantly. I read whatever I could find. If I have to put it shortly, I would say that MH is 'the Art surrounding Medical Science'. Well, that is how I understood it.

The day after my extensive Google research, I woke, as if to a new world. MH was everywhere. From the morning class till I came back to my room at 4, I could see it everywhere. In the posters on the Hospital ward, in my friend who had taken a detour to help this old patient pay her bills, in the attendant who was praying in the corner of our ward to the picture of her Deity, in the story of Syphilis that our teacher told us, in the doodle on the bench I sat, in the film that we watched few days back. I was surrounded by MH.

I am only a few days old into the world of MH. So far, the journey has been amazing. But there is so much more to see, so much more to learn. I feel like a traveller with a backpack, on a new destination, eager to explore ever.



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1. Dr. Purnima Barua
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3. Janumoni Senapati
4. Abir Kumar Baruah



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