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THE ROLE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL CURRICULA

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This paper will explore possible ways of integrating humanities disciplines in medical education.

In today's world, medical students have to learn to understand the social and cultural environment in which medicine is practiced. The humanities have long since have been the principal site of diversity in the academy. Now they can help medical students come to terms with diversity that is the context of today's medicine.

Studies in arts and humanities help recognize the limitations of purely biotechnical approach to patient care, in complex and paradigm-changing ways. Such studies also pave the way for understanding how social assumptions and values play out in healthcare policies. In sum, the humanities provide an additional insight into the human condition, allowing students "to consider human beings in their totality," in the words of Jean Delay, a pioneer of psychopharmacology who also maintained a literary career throughout his life.

Furthermore, humanities contribute to the development of complex interpretive skills, embracing affective aspects of intelligence as much as they embrace conventional rationalist forms of inquiry such as logic, analysis, deconstruction and critique. There is some evidence that medical students who have an additional background in the humanities are less vulnerable to burnout while studying and go on to perform better in important areas of practice. Approaches to developing specific learning outcomes and curricular guidelines will be discussed.