Writing in Medicine

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Introduction

- The role of the humanities in medicine has been discussed since the turn of the 21st century.
- Knowledge in the humanities can help physicians provide better palliative care.
- Writing is one way that medical schools have attempted to help students remain empathetic in the clinical years and improve patient interaction.

Efficacy of Writing on Daily Physician Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use for Writing</th>
<th>Percent Interviewees Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Reports</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Communication</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Communication</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia (Scientific Writing)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Physician Uses for Writing

Table 1 lists preliminary data about the most frequently mentioned uses for writing.

Discussion

- Fiction writing classes and reflective writing classes both bring different strengths to the medical student by teaching patient empathy and self-awareness, respectively.
- Instruction in writing creates a more well-rounded physician and fosters a skill that is useful throughout the life of the physician and leads to a higher level of care for the patient.

Suggestions and Conclusions

- Providing a class that combines aspects of previously developed writing classes can help maximize the benefit that medical school students receive from writing courses during medical school.

Types of Medical School Writing Classes

Reflective Writing

- Personal Reflection about one’s own successes and failures in the clinical setting.

Fiction Writing

- Personal illness narratives about one’s own experiences in the health care system.

- Peers edit and comment on the work produced by other students in Iowa Writer’s Workshop Fashion.