

## Perspective

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Although the field of medicine has experienced vast developments over the years, some areas have improved more than others. Medical schools now emphasize the need for more humanistic and well-rounded physicians. The concept of patient-centered care, which requires physicians to be listeners of their patients' stories, is currently the direction in which the field of medicine is heading; I feel that I am prepared for this change due to my background in Medical Humanities.

After completing the Medical Humanities program at Saint Louis University, I had a greater appreciation of the need for physicians to listen to stories. In my Medical Humanities coursework, I discussed novels written from the perspectives of both patients and physicians. I began to appreciate the importance of physician self-reflection and respect for patients, and the need for them really to understand their patients' backgrounds and how that affects their stories. I became so interested in how cultural differences affect patients' narratives that I shadowed abroad in the United Kingdom and Ghana. In both places, I compared how people viewed healthcare by interacting with and observing patients as they described their health issues to their providers. As I listened to their stories, I remembered the skills I learned in my Medical Humanities classes, and I started to understand what patients valued in their healthcare systems and why; all this gave me insights into the benefits and disadvantages within each type of healthcare system and ideas for future directions in our own healthcare system. These observations will, someday soon I hope, help me to become a better physician, one who can incorporate into my own work some of the helpful practices that physicians use abroad.

Reading novels about physicians and their patients illustrated the verbal, but more importantly, nonverbal interactions that occur in the physician-patient relationship. As these seemingly minute details in real life were spotlighted in the novels, I found myself being able to better communicate with those around me by paying attention to those very same nonverbal cues. And this has helped me excel in medical school when interviewing patients, as I was able to pick up on these cues and ask the right questions to pinpoint the diagnoses.

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Also important in the field of medical humanities are the stories physicians tell about themselves. The narratives I read in my classes, such as those written by medical professionals like Atul Gawande and Abraham Verghese, helped me cope with the stresses of medical school. Reading about the internal battles they faced when dealing with failure and stress helped me reflect on my mistakes and my successes as a college student and later as a medical student, and made me realize that it is okay not to be perfect.

These were all notions I had grasped before and during medical school that have helped me excel tremendously in my interactions with patients and with myself. Overall, I know that through storytelling and listening, I will become a more patient-centered, and more human, physician.

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