

# **Cultures Colliding: Teaching about Culture through Literature**

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# State of Cultural Competence in Medical Education

- CC education widespread in undergraduate and graduate medical education
- Improved CC associated with better patient outcomes, reduced health disparities, and improved access to care
- Research is inconsistent re whether medical students knowledge, attitudes, and skills can be positively changed through participation in a cc curriculum

# Defining the Problem

- Some research:
  - exposure to CCC has little/no effect on student skill acquisition
  - Evidence of pt blame when explaining difficulties in cross-cultural encounters
  - Concern that CCC promotes external conformity to perceived norms rather than deep reflection and increased respect for difference

# Understanding the Problem

- Traditional pedagogy influenced by biomedical model: lecture-based knowledge transmitted to produce observable, measurable behaviors
- Risk of culturally different pts/families becoming “othered” objects rather than living subjects
- Language of cultural competence emphasizes mastery and control

# Exploring Humanities-Based Educational Approaches

- Facilitate a shift in values, attitudes, assumptions about relationship, power, expertise, certainty
  - Humanities encourage position of not-knowing, indeterminacy, and vulnerability
  - Humanities provides narrative skills of close reading, critical analysis, and interpretation
  - Humanities engages the emotions, drawing the learner closer to the patient, rather than turning patient and family into alien, threatening “others”
- In short, the humanities promote attitudes of cultural humility

# Humanities-Based Pedagogy

- **Attitudes of**
  - Respect
  - Caring curiosity
  - Humility
- **Skills of**
  - Presence
  - Deep listening
  - Creativity to generate third alternatives
- **Overall goal:**
  - Promoting collaborative process in working across cultures

# Discussion Points:

## “Maria” and “What Is Lost”

- Identification of bias in healthcare professionals
- What are the roots of bias and how does it arise?
- What are more collaborative approaches that might be taken?
- How can such approaches be cultivated and sustained?

# Discussion Points: The Spirit Catches You

- Emotional connection – embodying others' perspectives
- Identification of culturally-based impasses
- Alternative approaches and how these might be conveyed to learners



# SUMMARY POINTS

- Emotional engagement
- Appreciation of multiple perspectives
- Toleration of uncertainty, ambiguity
- Reflection
- Exploring possibilities