

The Program in Medical Humanities and Arts at UCI-SoM

What is medical humanities?

MH is a diverse field of scholarship encompassing literature, visual and performing arts, sometimes music, some social sciences (i.e., medical anthropology), and ethics as they can help us better understand patients' and families' experiences of illness; the doctor-patient relationship; factors promoting physician wellness; and how individual health and wellbeing are affected by larger societal structural assumptions and practices

What Is the Program in Medical Humanities & Arts at UCI-SoM?

<http://www.meded.uci.edu/student-life/medical-humanities.asp>

- The MH program at UCI came into existence in 1998
- It has a strongly educational and curricular focus; has also resulted in considerable student/faculty scholarship and research

What are the Goals of the UCI Program?

The goal of the program is to *integrate humanities and arts into medical education as a way of developing critical thinking, kindness, compassion, and empathy in learners*; in particular, to help learners more deeply understand the nature of human suffering; and to give them a broader approach to clinical medicine that will contribute to the healing of both their patients and themselves

What Kind of Coursework Does the Medical Humanities Program Offer?

The program has both required and elective curriculum across all 4 years of medical school:

- **The Mindful Medicine (for) Clinical Challenges Curriculum** (Preclinical years 1 and 2) – includes sessions on Patients' Stories; Patient-Centered Interviewing; Theater Exercises to Teach Presence, Nonverbal Awareness, Listening, and Teamwork; Mindful Practices to Build Self- and Other Awareness; Dealing with Difficult Patient Encounters; Breaking Bad News; Conversations about End of Life
- **1st year electives** (Patient Stories/Doctor Stories (narrative medicine); Examine the Painting/Examine the Patient (art and medicine); History of Medicine; Improvisational Theater Skills); elective projects linked to the Anatomy course
- **Required reflection and story-telling sessions as part of 4 third year clerkships** (Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, and Pediatrics) . These sessions involve reflective writing and original creative projects.
- A popular **4th year elective, Art of Doctoring**, that enrolls half of the graduating class. Topics include doctor-patient communication; nonverbal communication; doctor-patient relationships[motivational interviewing; difficult clinical encounters; difficult clinical conversations; improvisational theater for physicians; loss, grief, and healing; interprofessional teams/challenging work relationships; sustaining compassion in medicine; self-care for physicians; managing medical error; diversity, inclusion, and equity in the physician workforce;

social determinants of illness; medical professionalism. These sessions involve role-play, narrative readings, reflective writing, and creative projects.

What Might Happen During an MH Session?

Examples of curricular activities include

- Reading a poem about a doctor, breaking bad news to a patient, then discussing its implications for real world patient care
- Performing a medically themed play to better understand the perspectives of patient, doctor, and nurse
- Engaging in improvisational theater exercises to better learn how to respond to unexpected events and to work as a team
- Creating original art and poetry as a means of reflecting on clinical training

The MH Program Encourages Research and Scholarship

- **Medical humanities research opportunities are available for a limited number of 1st and 4th year students**
- **The Program also awards a Graduation with distinction in humanities or arts to 4th year students who have created an original body of work and have contributed their art to the School of Medicine and the larger community**
- **\$1000 prize is awarded to the 4th year student who demonstrates an outstanding body of original creative work and has made contributions to SoM through their art/music/poetry**

Other Program Activities

The Program sponsors Plexus, which celebrated its 20th year in April, 2019

<http://www.meded.uci.edu/student-life/med-humanities-plexus.asp>

The Program also sponsors medical-humanities related conferences, public lectures, and symposia, including Medical Humanities symposia for medical students, a popular symposium on Poetry of Healing and Hope, and various one-person performances on living with cancer, AIDS etc.

The Program sponsors an annual Medical Students Art Exhibit; as well as other medical student projects such as The Mural Project that involves students, faculty, staff, patients, and families.

The Program sponsors an undergraduate organization for premedical students, Healing through Humanities, that works with medical students and faculty. They have created a narrative medicine blog, the Scribe <https://www.thescribeatuci.com/>, of first person stories of illness and healing; and have implemented a photojournalism project at the Family Health Center, Humans of Santa Ana.

Finally, the Program has close ties with the newly established UCI Center for Medical Humanities (main campus) and UCI Illuminations, the Chancellor's Arts & Culture Initiative.

How Do Students Evaluate MH Experiences?

Student feedback is very positive. Students feel that humanities- and arts-based practices that encourage self-reflection, understanding of others' perspectives, and constructive questioning of the ways "things are done" in medicine can be both renewing and deepen understanding of what medicine is and can be.

The Future of the MH Program

To maintain and grow such a multifaceted program, the sustained efforts of a dedicated faculty member are necessary. An Endowed Chair would provide stability for such a position, making it independent of changes in the School of Medicine leadership that might or might not choose to invest in medical humanities. In addition, an Endowed Chair would generate additional resources that could be used to build on the existing Program. Examples of such growth could include:

- Expansion of medical humanities curriculum to all 6 required 3rd year clerkships
- Faculty development focused on how to integrate medical humanities materials into their clinical and didactic teaching
- Establishment of an annual medical humanities conference exploring cutting edge scholarship
- Initiating a medical humanities film series
- Systematic development of relationships with other College of Health Sciences to promote medical humanities in the Schools of Nursing, Population Health, and Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Closer ties with campus Schools of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Social Ecology to develop collaborative curriculum and research/scholarship