

MS1 ANTHROPOLOGISTS ON MARS

Slide 1: Intro. The instructions for this assignment ask you to imagine that you are an anthropologist visiting an indigenous culture for the first time and observing the habits and mores of the people.

Slide 2: Sacks. This exercise was derived from a book by the well-known neurologist Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, in which he describes his efforts to enter the worlds of his severely neurologically challenged patients.

Slide 3: To do so, he used three skills: 1) close attention 2) nonjudgmental curiosity 3) a sense of wonder which we hope you will bring to all your future clinical encounters.

Slide 4: Planet Medicine. Entering the world of medicine in a way is like landing on a different planet. Planet Medicine has its own language, customs, food (terrible), and culture. Part of your job as medical students cum anthropologists is to start studying and understanding this strange culture.

Slide 5: Red Planet/Patient. As your education progresses, Planet Medicine will become increasingly familiar and known to you – which is good. It's also important to remember that to many of our patients, it remains the red planet – mysterious and often scary.

So as you embark on this experience, remember Sacks' skills:

Slide 6: First, pay attention to everything!

You'll be interested in the way doctors and teams arrive at a differential diagnosis, how they decide on medications and treatment plans, what vital signs they're monitoring –

Slide 6: Communication. But also take a minute to note how they are talking with their patients, with their residents, with each other – note the words they use; and what they are communicating nonverbally

Slide 7: Emotions. Also attend to the emotional tone in the space – what do patients and family members seem to be feeling? What do the physicians seem to be feeling?

Slide 8: Second, be curious!

You may not have much medical knowledge yet, but you have something most doctors no longer have – fresh eyes!

Think critically – question everything you see/

Slide 9: Finally, be amazed!

Medicine is awesome. You may not witness that life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (which mostly happens on tv anyway), or any babies being born, but if you think about it, so much of every day medicine is a minor miracle. And while doctors contribute to miracles, they don't always make them.

Slide 10. To illustrate this point, I'm going to ask 5 volunteers to come up and read a very short skit.

Slide 11: Text.

So this is just a reminder to keep humble, keep your eyes open, and don't miss the miraculous.