

Virtual Mentor

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics
August 2014, Volume 16, Number 8: 618-621.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

Creating a Space for the Arts and Humanities at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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Building an arts and humanities program at a health sciences campus doesn't usually involve an actual building. When I joined the faculty at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in 2009, there were two projects under construction. The first was my responsibility—the Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program. The second was the physical space that would house it and the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. While those of us engaged in the development and implementation of academic programs approach our work as largely conceptual—despite seeing our efforts actualized when students come into our classrooms or when journals publish our scholarship—this project would be literally concretized with steel, glass, drywall, and paint. Thus, the stated mission of the program reflects both aspiration and actualization: to provide a unique facility and a comprehensive network in order to develop and integrate transformational learning, groundbreaking scholarship, and exceptional artwork within the environments of health care education, research, and practice.

In fact, where the Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program lives is as critical to its work as what the program does. It is both a physical space—with a dedicated and secure art gallery, an in-the-round auditorium with four screens for presentations and films and a concert grand piano gracing the foyer—and a place to exchange ideas, inspire collaboration, foster compassion, fuel imagination, and transcend boundaries. It is here in the Fulginiti Pavilion for Ethics and Humanities that the program realizes the universal power of the arts and humanities to connect student and teacher, patient and professional, citizen and artist, benefactor and institution. One local art and architecture critic described the facility as “a space for reflection ... [whose] impact is immediate, both tactically and emotionally.... It breathes and also provides breathing space, a rhythm, for the overall campus” [1]. Within this special environment, the day-to-day work of the program encompasses education, inquiry, expression, and engagement.

Education

The education program focuses on three areas:

- *Relevant and rigorous integration of the arts and humanities into health professions education and practice for all schools and allied programs on the campus.* This program integrates humanities content into the required undergraduate medical school curriculum through, for example, student discussions of literary texts and their own reflective writing during anatomy

lab or sessions on learning to look at works of art as a way to improve observational skills. In the physical therapy program, seminars explore disability across the lifespan through film, literature, and art. Electives such as the semester-long Film in Healthcare course for pharmacy students and intensive seminars for senior medical students such as Film and Mental Illness and HIV/AIDS and American Culture are highly successful.

- *Innovative and sustainable collaborations with faculty in the humanities and arts across the University of Colorado.* This collaborative endeavor includes the development and implementation of a new minor in health humanities for undergraduates, the ongoing development of a track in the health humanities in the Master of Humanities program, and a universitywide educational program in disability studies that will be available to all students with the future goal of awarding them a certificate in the field.
- *Creative and accessible programs for the community.* These programs include a weekly lecture series on the arts in medicine, writing workshops, film festivals, and an initiative in music and medicine that connects faculty, students, staff, and the public for collaborative work in the areas of performance, research, and arts-based therapy.

Inquiry

The program contributes to scholarship and research:

- As the home of the *Journal of Medical Humanities*, the foremost peer-reviewed academic journal in the interdisciplinary project of applying the arts and humanities to health care education, practice, and research.
- As a setting for regional, national and international conferences.

Expression and Engagement

The program supports community outreach through the arts with:

- Publications such as an annual literary and arts magazine.
- Musical performances by a professionally directed choir and orchestra.
- Workshops with visiting artists and writers.
- Art exhibits related to the workings of body, mind, and spirit and to the experiences of health, disease, and disability.

Just as the sciences require special facilities to support human discovery, so also must the arts have distinctive spaces to celebrate human imagination, and the gallery at the Fulginiti Pavilion is dedicated to bridging the cultural divide between science and art to explore the most essential questions about human experience: who we are and how do we care for one another? To ensure that the arts are incorporated into student education, clinical practice, and the daily life of our community, the gallery provides a secure venue for curated exhibitions of painting and photography and multimedia installations.

Since its opening in September 2012, we have mounted seven major exhibits for approximately 16,000 visitors, including *Four Questions*, created by Judy Chicago

and Donald Woodman. Mounted on large, accordion-style panels, the work poses ethical questions related to the atrocities of the Holocaust raised by contemporary science and medicine. *Tattoo Nation*, a photographic exhibit and documentary film by Eric Schwartz, had special appeal to visitors with its portraits of bodies inscribed with designs that affirm group identity, proclaim religious beliefs, or present a pictorial autobiography on the geography of the skin. Our most recent exhibit in the gallery is *The Joe Bonham Project: Drawing the Stories of America's Wounded Veterans* [2]. Joe Bonham is the central character in Dalton Trumbo's 1938 novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*. Horribly wounded in combat, he wants to tour the country in a glass box as a living example of the realities of war, but that hope is never realized, and Joe lives out his days—alone and forgotten. In February 2011, a group of artists began documenting the experiences of service members and their families undergoing medical treatment in trauma wards and rehabilitation centers for devastating injuries, so that a new generation of “Joe Bonhams” would not be forgotten. The exhibit not only includes the visual representations of wounded warriors but also their life stories, bearing witness to the grueling journeys of American veterans who have survived the harrowing terrors of combat but have not come out “intact.”

These exhibits bring artists to campus for public presentations and classroom discussions and provide opportunities for related programming such as panel presentations, film screenings, and faculty lectures. Moreover, our students have the opportunity to exhibit their own art, such as one senior medical student's mixed media work illustrating her longitudinal research project on the social, personal, and medical challenges of persons with mental illness in our city, or another student's piano and vocal performance as part of his research project on musical compositions as illness narratives by artists with serious mental illness.

Whether it is integrating content into curricula, collaborating across disciplines, or creating opportunities for expression and engagement, the Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program works creatively and energetically to build community and to transform the culture of academic medicine with and from a unique and beautiful building.

References

1. Rinaldi RM. The Fulginiti Pavilion: A small box for big ideas at Anschutz Medical Campus. *The Denver Post*. September 14, 2012:2. www.denverpost.com/theater/ci_21537599/small-boxfor-big-ideas-atfitzsimons?source=email. Accessed June 25, 2014.
2. *The Joe Bonham Project: Drawing the Stories of America's Wounded Veterans*. <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/bioethics/Pages/Joe-Bonham-Project.aspx>. Accessed June 25, 2014.

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