



The Fundamental Role of the Arts and Humanities in Medical Education



December 2021 FRAHME Newsletter

This monthly newsletter is designed to keep you up to date on news from the [AAMC's Fundamental Role of Arts and Humanities in Medical Education \(FRAHME\) initiative](#). If you know others who are interested in learning more about integrating the arts and humanities into medical education, please forward this email to them. To subscribe, they can [sign up here](#).

Poetry in Audio: *The Good Listening Podcast*



The Good Listening Project partnered with the AAMC to conduct over 250 interviews with health professionals and trainees, then transformed each conversation into an original work of poetry. Thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, [The Good Listening Podcast](#) is now available. In each of the 15 episodes — organized around themes such as gratitude, hidden struggles, and healing — listener poets bring you three poems along with the stories behind the conversations that inspired each poem.

AAMC Virtual Seminar: Legacy of Medicine During the Holocaust and its Contemporary Relevance

Please join us on Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2022 from 12-1:15 p.m. ET for a virtual seminar, “Legacy of Medicine During the Holocaust and its Contemporary Relevance.” Hedy S. Wald, PhD and Sabine Hildebrandt, MD, both commissioners of the [Lancet Commission on Medicine and the Holocaust](#), will catalyze critical thinking on the relevance of the Holocaust for contemporary medicine. This seminar will help health care trainees and professionals reflect on their core values in the service of humanistic and ethically responsible patient care. **Please join us and consider offering a post-seminar discussion or other activity at your institution to extend the learning.** Drs. Wald and Hildebrandt have created [three options for suggested one-hour reflection activities](#), complete with slides and faculty guide for your use. [Register for the seminar](#).

Featured FRAHME Grantee: Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine



Erin Gentry Lamb, PhD



Ryan Jenkins, MD

Each month we feature one of our [eight FRAHME grantees](#). This month we spoke with Erin Gentry Lamb, PhD, of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and Ryan Jenkins, MD, of Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital

Through their grant, "**Learning to Care for Dying Patients: A Multi-Outcome Study of Humanities Interventions**," they are using four one-hour small group sessions to discuss varied humanities texts (i.e. poetry, short stories, art, podcasts) as a way for second year medical students to explore their attitudes toward death and feel more comfortable discussing death and dying with patients from diverse backgrounds.

Lamb and Jenkins will measure comfort with—and anxiety about—death in all second year medical students using standardized scales and a simulation in which the student must help a terminal patient think through options when no curative measures remain. They will be interested to see if their students have better outcomes than their peers who did not take the course.

What does this work mean to your team?

As lifelong lovers of literature and people who have both received formal training in the humanities, we know first-hand the power that art has to teach important, intangible concepts to students. Death defines people's lives, but it is disproportionately neglected in medical education and viewed implicitly by many doctors as failure; we believe the humanities can help reframe the active, essential role physicians can play in their patient's terminal experiences.

What kinds of texts are students learning from?

Every student participating in our course receives a copy of Donald Hall's *Without*, a book of poetry which chronicles the illness and death of Hall's wife and his subsequent grieving process with plainspoken raw intimacy. Students are drawn into Hall's painful journey, and this connection enables them to explore the inescapable individuality of illness and death, and to question if and how a physician might accompany their patient on such a journey.

Activity Ideas for Teaching and Assessing Medical Knowledge

[The FRAHME Getting Started Guide](#) offers activity ideas for educators seeking to incorporate the arts and humanities into their teaching. The guide features several examples of how the arts and humanities can help in [teaching medical knowledge](#). Activity ideas include:

- Using a collection called "Spot the Diagnosis" where learners are directed to observe pieces of historic art that hint at an underlying medical condition.

- Exploring a collection titled "Significant Diseases Throughout History" where faculty can find historical documents related to various contagious diseases.
- Inviting medical illustrators to anatomy lab so learners can see firsthand how artists transform a three-dimensional body into a two-dimensional drawing.

Award-Winning Essays on Humanism in Healthcare

Academic Medicine and the *Academic Medicine* Podcast recently featured the second- and third-place winners of the [Hope Babette Tang Humanism in Healthcare Essay Contest](#).

"Why do I find it so much easier to deal with death after the fact than I do watching its slow, looming approach, like the shadow of a cloud creeping over my face? I think of cupping water between my hands, the spaces between fingers that I cannot hold tight."

- From second-place essay "The Motherhouse," by medical student Davy Ran

[Print version](#) | [Audio version](#)

"My time, energy, and focus are finite; one clear, properly motivated action will come at the cost of another. It is easy to think this means I will miss out on important moments, or that I may disappoint some for the benefit of others. But the antidote is to recognize that each experience is special."

- From third-place essay "Someone Else's Mother," by Fletcher Bell

[Print version](#) | [Audio version](#)

Featured Poem

[Act Now](#)

I Can't Breathe. Please Help.
COVID-19 or police chokehold.
Emergency Medicine doctors -
we see it all. Rush to aid.
Give oxygen, intubate, CT scan,
medication?
What can we do? Anything?
Powerlessness.
Coronavirus and systemic
racism.
We can witness, We can feel,
We can give voice to our
patients.
Act with what energy and time
remains.

-Alisa Hayes, faculty
member



This poem is part of a collection of [hundreds of contributions](#) to our story sharing project, which offered a way for physicians, residents, and medical students to reflect on the uncertainty surrounding the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice.