



The Fundamental Role of the Arts and Humanities in Medical Education



April 2025 FRAHME Newsletter

This bi-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](#).

Integrating Arts and Humanities in Times of Uncertainty



Times of uncertainty call for health professionals to employ skills such as empathy, perspective-taking, and tolerance of ambiguity. There are many ways to use arts and humanities to enhance those skills. Here are a few resources from the FRAHME Getting Started Guide:

- Film: [Films for Teaching Interpersonal and Communication Skills](#)
- Visual Art: [Rx/Museum Initiative Themes](#)
- Improv: [Using Theatre Techniques to Teach Empathy](#)
- History: [The Legacy of Medicine During the Holocaust and its Contemporary Relevance](#)
- Literature: [Medicine and the Silent Oracle: An Exercise in Uncertainty](#)
- Mixed Arts and Humanities: [Health Humanities Portraits in Context](#)

Can a Visual Arts Activity Help Residents Care for Difficult Patients?

A new study, [A Visual Arts Activity to Support Residents as They Care for "Difficult Patients"](#), describes how a simple and low cost art-based perspective-taking activity helped learners increase their comfort when caring for "difficult patients".

FRAHME consultant Brandy King recently spoke to authors Mariah Quinn, MD, MPH,

Kathlyn Fletcher, MD, MA, Sarah Floden, MD and Amy Zelenski, PhD about the results they found through a pre/post-evaluation of 77 participants over five years.

Q1: Where did the idea for this activity come from?

We developed this activity after observing how both [engaging with art](#) and [playing improvisational theater games](#) helped our learners approach challenging scenarios in new ways. In this activity we asked learners to select a piece of art that they imagined would hold meaning for the specific "difficult patient" they had in mind... [Read more](#)

To read the full interview, log into the AAMC virtual community Arts and Humanities in Health Professions Education." If you have not yet joined this free and engaging platform, [we invite you to join over 340 professionals](#) who use the group to share resources, ideas, and insights.

"When Art Meets Medicine" in AAMCNews



Although some may see the worlds of arts and medicine as distinct, doctors have for generations appreciated how artistic pursuits can enhance their medical skills. From a New Yorker cartoonist-medical educator to a photographer-radiologist, the physicians profiled here share their thoughts on how merging art with medicine helps them treat patients, enhances communication, and soothes their spirits in times of stress. [Read more](#)

Academic Medicine Calls for Letters to the Editor from Trainees

CALL FOR PAPERS

Save the date! The AAMC peer-reviewed journal *Academic Medicine* will open a call for original submissions for its annual Letters to the Editor feature on May 9. The journal seeks letters from trainees in medicine, other health professions, and the biomedical sciences on the topic of “The moment I knew” — a pivotal moment in one’s professional life. **The submission period opens on May 9 and closes on May 19.** [Read more](#)

Recent Literature on Arts and Humanities Published in Academic Medicine and MedEdPORTAL

[Being Human: Envisioning the Future of Museum-Based Education for Health Professionals](#)

Sean Tackett, MD, MPH; Kamna S. Balhara, MD, MA; Toni Ungaretti, PhD; Philip Yenawine, MA; Margaret S. Chisolm, MD

This article describes the purpose, design, and outcomes of a national convening of museum educators and health professions educators, administrators, researchers, and learners whose aim was to envision the future of museum-based education for health professionals.

What Else We're Reading (and Watching!)

[How the Arts Can Create Healthier Communities](#), *CBS Sunday Morning*

In this seven-minute segment, Broadway director Lear deBessonet, the force behind the initiative Arts For EveryBody, describes a national public health movement to connect more people to the arts and create healthier communities. Jill Sonke, PhD, director of research initiatives at the Center for Arts and Medicine at the University of Florida, mentions that 75% of medical schools around the country are integrating the arts in medical education.

[How Is Art Used to Train Surgeons? A Survey of 198 Surgery Residency Program Directors](#), *Journal of Surgical Education*

A survey of residency directors found that opportunities to participate in organized art-related activities through surgery programs are rare, but program directors do perceive that there is value in art-related exercises for surgical trainees.

[Whole Personhood In Medical Education: Visual Thinking Strategy, Close Reading, and Creative Practice With a Diversity and Equity Lens](#), *Social Science & Medicine*

Researchers found that a required curriculum featuring art and written narratives by historically marginalized groups lead to a statistically significant increase in individuals' ability to identify bias, recognize perspectives different than their own, and be empathetic toward others.

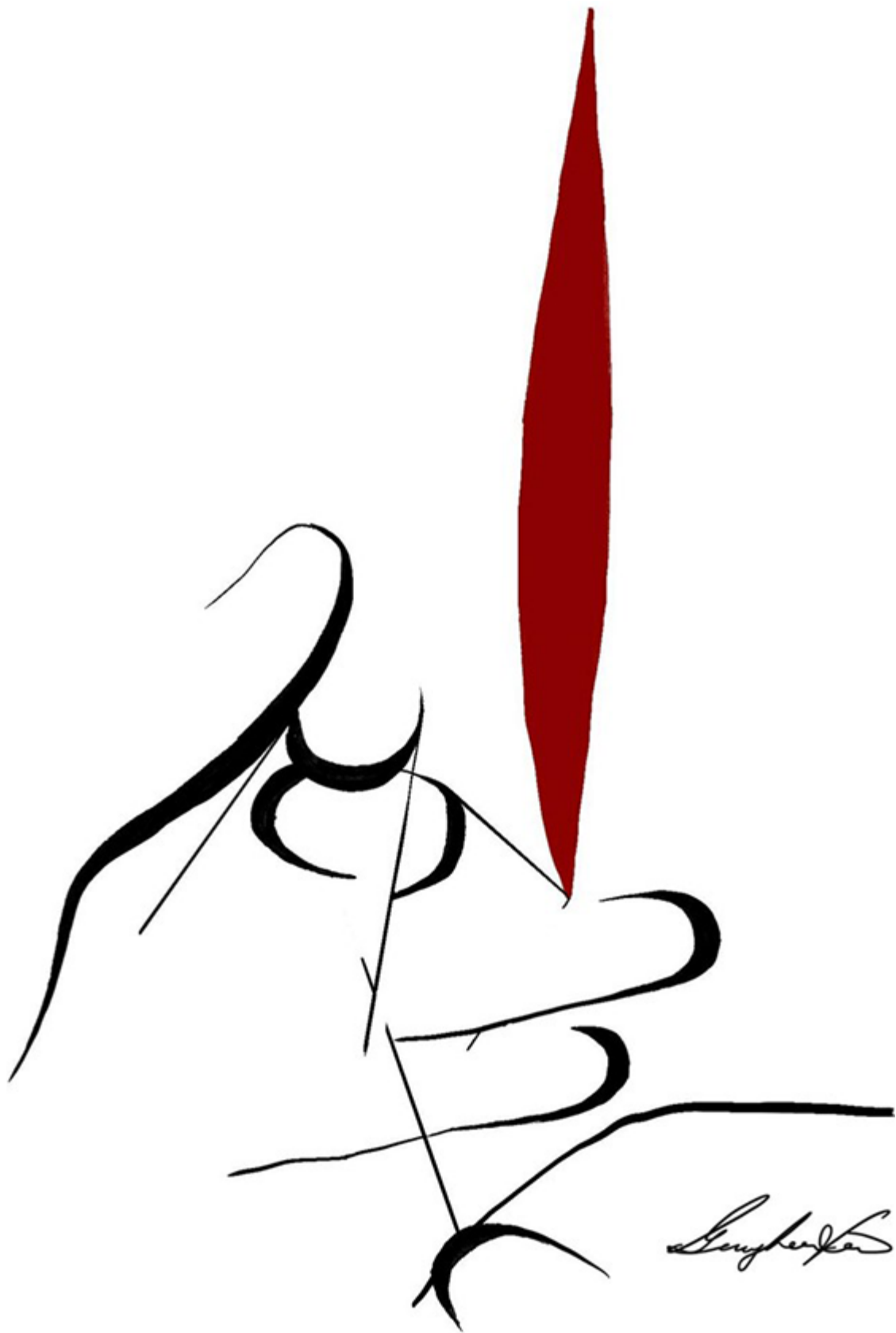
[Anatomy and Arts: Student Perspectives on Clay Modelling in Anatomy Education](#), *Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine*

In a study of 19 anatomy students using clay modelling guided by postgraduate visual arts students, participants reported improved anatomical understanding, retention, and metacognitive awareness.

[Narratives of Mental Illness and Well-being: A 6-Week Course Aiming to Improve Medical Student Empathy and Resilience Through the Creative Arts](#), *Academic Psychiatry*

Pre- and post-course survey data from a six-week seminar-style course using visual arts, film, and literature demonstrated that medical students' empathy and resilience were improved at statistically significant levels.

Featured Artwork from AAMC Constituents



Left-Handed Knot by Gordon Xie, medical student at Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine

Artist's Statement:

Left-Handed Knot is meant to capture the elegance of routine surgical practices. In popular culture, medicine and surgery are often portrayed with exaggerated precision and

poise. Maybe these misconceptions stem from the culture of medicine; maybe they reflect the patient's desire for confidence and reassurance; or maybe they just make for good television. In any case, the beauty of medicine and surgery is not contingent on perfection or strict adherence to form; there is beauty in improvisation and reliance on others, and there is elegance inherent in the skills of the trade and the person on the table.