

Narrative Medicine Impacts on Medical Students and Residents: Understanding Utility of the Workshop Space

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Introduction

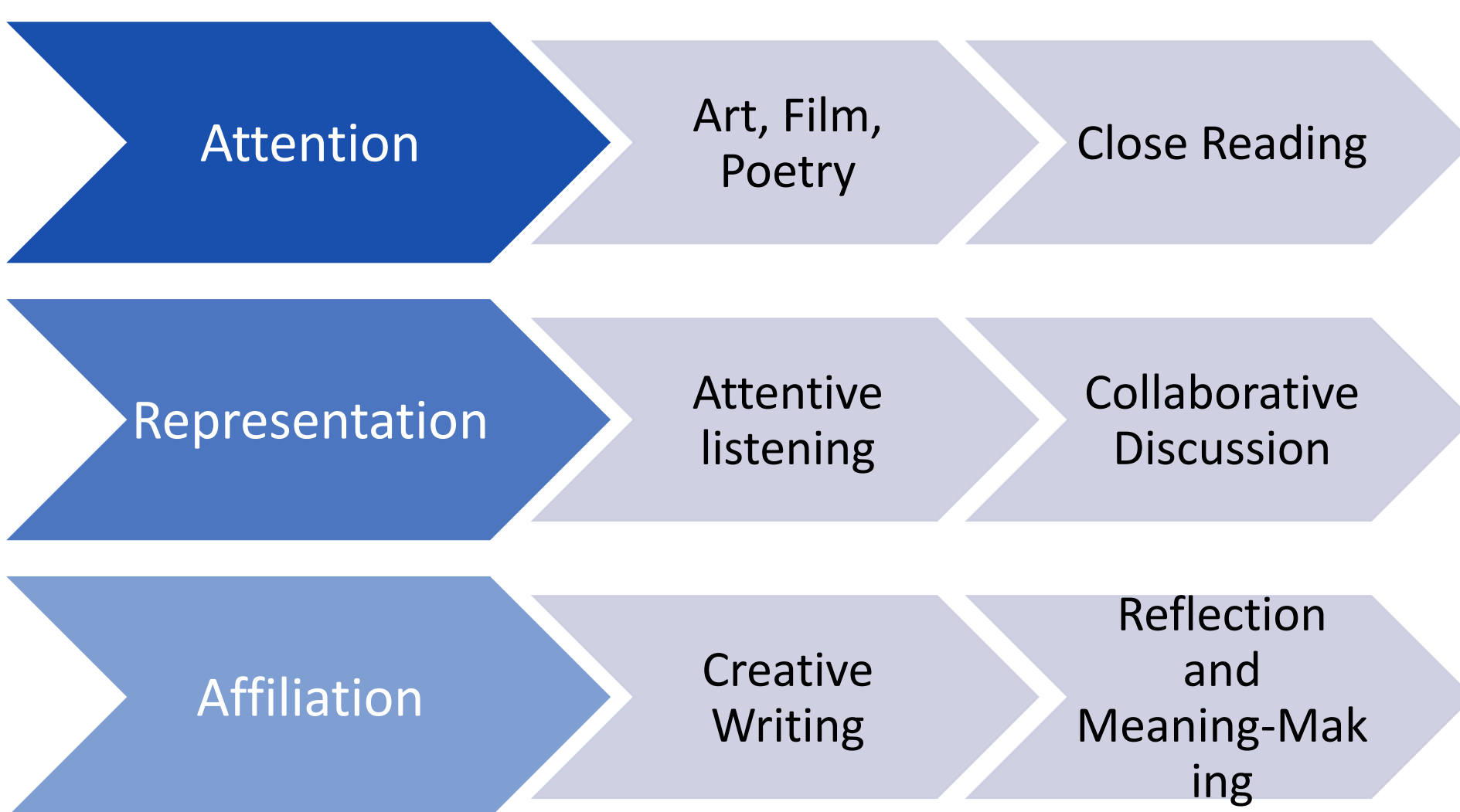
Narrative medicine focuses on patient illness experiences and uses storytelling to communicate these experiences. This study seeks to evaluate narrative medicine workshops as a medical education tool where participants are asked to engage with poetry, art, or film and reflect on themes in relation to patients and oneself. This research project will compare the perspectives of medical students and resident physicians participating in narrative medicine workshops.

Objectives

1. Identify the impacts of narrative medicine workshops on participants' sense of self, perceptions of doctor-patient relationships, and roles within healthcare communities
2. Compare the experiences of medical students and residents after narrative medicine workshops to gauge its utility as a medical education tool
3. Elaborate common themes and takeaways of participants within the workshop space

Methods

Narrative Medicine Workshop



- **Medical Students:** Medical Humanities and Clinical Bioethics (MHCB) 6 class sessions
- **Residents:** 1-hour monthly morning didactic sessions or 6 session certificate program sessions

Sample Workshop Texts



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, 1558



A scene from Berry Jenkin's 2016 film *Moonlight*

Data Analysis

- Surveys administered pre-workshop and post-workshop
 - 15 questions, Likert-style, measures agreement to statements regarding narrative medicine principles
 - Analysis via chi square, unequal and equal variance paired t-tests
- Optional qualitative interviews after the workshop series

Response	Value	Response	Value
Strongly Disagree	1	Never	1
Somewhat Disagree	2	Rarely	2
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	Sometimes	3
Somewhat Agree	4	Often	4
Strongly Agree	5	Always	5

Results

Question	Post-Survey-Pre-Survey	P-value
I can describe narrative medicine in my own words	(n=15) 0.80 ± 1.26	0.028
I currently write stories to express my feelings and emotions	(n=14) 0.71 ± 1.20	0.045
I am moved by the emotions of my patients	(n=14) -0.43 ± 0.65	0.028
I am properly prepared to handle emotionally complex clinical situations	(n=14) 0.57 ± 0.65	0.006

Qualitative Themes:

- **Medical Students:** "I felt a greater connection to my classmates...having that vulnerability around them helped me feel more connected to everybody that was there."
- **Residents:** "When you're writing the report, it obviously has to be clinical and descriptive... thinking about literature and the format of your sentences and discussion, you're presenting information in a concise way because you're telling a story."

Question	Medical Student	Resident Physician	P-value
I can describe narrative medicine in my own words (pre)	(n=6) 4.0 ± 0.0	(n=9) 3.33 ± 0.71	0.0516 ¹
I have used stories in the past to relate to other people (post)	(n=6) 5.0 ± 0.0	(n=9) 4.22 ± 0.67	0.0081 ¹
I have used writing as a way of reflecting on my experiences (pre)	(n=6) 4.17 ± 0.41	(n=9) 2.11 ± 1.05	0.0006 ²
I am prepared to handle emotionally complex situations (pre)	(n=6) 3.0 ± 0.89	(n=9) 4.11 ± 0.60	0.0125 ²
I look for meaning in art I engage with (post)	(n=5) 4.80 ± 0.45	(n=9) 3.67 ± 1.41	0.0501 ¹
Medical education needs more training in empathy and compassion (post)	(n=5) 5.0 ± 0.0	(n=9) 3.78 ± 0.97	0.0054 ¹
I want an outlet to express my emotion (pre)	(n=5) 4.83 ± 0.41	(n=9) 3.44 ± 1.42	0.0204 ¹

¹ unequal variance two sample t-test ² equal variance two sample t-test

Discussion

- All participants were better able to describe narrative medicine at the conclusion of the workshop series
- All participants felt moved to a greater degree by the emotions of their patients at the conclusion of the workshop series
- Medical Students expressed they felt more connected to classmates through vulnerability in the workshop space
 1. Used writing to reflect on their experiences more than residents
 2. Feel that medical education needs more training in empathy
 3. More often look for meaning in the art they engage with
- Residents discussed the utility of narrative medicine in terms of their clinical duties (writing report, presenting patients)
 1. Felt more properly prepared to handle emotionally complex clinical situations
- Differences between medical students and residents were expected and most likely attributed to the differences in clinical duties at different times in medical training
- This study is limited by a small sample size and differing structures of the narrative medicine workshop for participants

Conclusions

- This study highlights the importance of using humanities driven medical education tools to engage trainees in topics of empathy and compassion
- Narrative medicine workshops can benefit physicians through offering a space of reflection and creativity while indirectly serving to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship

References

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