

Human Values in Medicine (The Origin)

During a 1977 meeting in the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine (NEOUCOM) conference room on Martinel Drive in Kent, Ohio, the liaison officers of University of Akron, Kent State University and Youngstown State University informed the NEOUCOM Provost that they would be unable to provide special courses in the Humanities and Behavioral Science for the NEOCOM pre-medical students as originally planned. They indicated that they were sorry but that keeping this commitment would be too expensive to accomplish. How would our medical students obtain this needed requirement for graduation?

As Chair of Behavioral Sciences at NEOUCOM (now North East Ohio Medical University, NEOMed), I returned to my office with an idea that could meet these requirements. Prior to becoming a NEOUCOM Chair, I had been the Chair of the Graduate Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at Kent State University and had organized and operated a program that might serve as a model to meet the needs of our medical students in a unique way. The program was called The Guidance Issues Series and consisted of Short Courses (every three weeks for nine separate periods and a series of workshops by noted leaders in psychology). Instead of a student taking a three credit hour course (nine weeks for three hours a week) they might now be able to select three week sessions with the equivalent of one credit hour, a credit amount not normally offered, while added to other choices, would result in a three, or six or even nine hours of credit. The short courses covered specific topics that normally would be include in other lower courses. Examples included: various phobias; weight reduction plans; adoption issues; communication skills; personality types; and the like. A student might select a Short Course in Fall, Winter and Spring and receive a three hour credit. A student could also attend a Thursday evening public presentation by a national expert, and for a fee, an all day workshop public presented by that expert. Examples included: Glasser (Reality Therapy); Ellis (Rational Emotive Therapy); and, Selye (Stress) and the like. On occasion, we would charge a small fee for the public presentation as we did of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (Death and Dying) when we charged \$1.00/person and 1,000 folks attended her public presentation, covering at the time her very expensive fee of \$750 (and forty folks attended her workshop the next day for \$20 each (\$800). The excess

money was kept in a fund to support the cost of speakers who were not as well known or as popular.

I wrote up a plan for medical students to have short courses during three one month periods when they did not have regularly scheduled classes but were often attending interviews in other locations for residency positions. In a too ambitious program, which nearly exhausted me several years later, I developed a program of short courses, public presentations and workshops that students might attend during any of the three months sessions and could meet their requirements by accumulating a certain number of points. The students would be required to receive 40% of their points in Behavioral Science Courses, 40% in Humanities Courses and 20% in Personal Development Courses (Such as guitar lessons, photography courses, meditation/yoga instruction and unique travel proposals).

The Provost liked the idea but felt that he should appoint a six member committee (two from each university... one each from behavioral science and one from the humanities to insure that the universities would accept this program). By having the programs at the college of medicine, students would be saved many trips to their home campus as they now lived nearer the college of medicine. After numerous meetings, the committee felt that the personal development portion was frivolous and voted to make the program divided equally between the humanities and behavior science. The program was named Human Values in Medicine (HVM)

The program was premiered during the Class of 81's senior year. Several students were outspoken regarding their dislike of this added requirement as I was not permitted to announce/explain the program until August of the first year of operation. The majority of the students gave the program a very positive evaluation, even inviting several of the commencement speakers from our list of workshop leaders. The first year of operation was very exhausting as I conducted the program by myself in addition to regular teaching and administrative duties. The second year I was authorized to employ a full time assistant. Eventually, the HVM program became a program operating under its own administration, with Martin Kohn as the Director, and in later years Dr. Delese Wear.

Lastly, during the second year of the program, Martin and I initiated a poetry competition for students from other medical schools. The first year of this competition, we received submissions for every medical school in the

United States. Finalists were selected by consortium poetry professors, finalists were flown to our medical school where a workshop was conducted by Dr. John Stone, Poet-Physician, and a winner selected. The competition is now called the William Carlos Williams Poetry Competition and periodic chapbooks of poetry by medical students are published.

The Human Values in Medicine Program has been a great success.

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