Why medicos should read literature?

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As a result of disproportional stress on marks in matric and premedical studies on “marks” and on science subjects by the teachers and parents, habit of reading literature and general reading has further dwindled in graduates entering in medical related professions like medicine, nursing, pharmacy and physical therapy. This has made them less aware of them social and civilizational undercurrents of their society and less capable of communicating effectively with patients, their colleagues and within the profession in general making them less effective in what they are doing.

Literature is broadly defined as any written or spoken work, but it is most commonly used to describe imaginative or artistic works like novels, poems, and plays. It serves as a method of recording human experience, transmitting culture, and evoking deep reflection or emotion.

Literature is typically divided into four primary categories:

- **Fiction:** Imaginative stories, such as novels and short stories, which may be inspired by real life but are products of the author's invention.
- **Poetry:** Highly structured or free-form verse that uses rhythm, metaphor, and aesthetic language to express feelings and ideas.
- **Drama:** Scripts and plays designed to be performed by actors in front of an audience.
- **Nonfiction:** Factual prose that is crafted with artistic or literary flair, such as biographies, essays, and memoirs.

To begin with, first of all developing a lifelong reading habit is not the priority in our schooling and early education. Instead, all the emphasis is on memorization, rote learning and exact

production on the examination paper of the material wanted by examiners. As a result, our average student fails to understand why literature matters. In the midst of pressing classes, mountains of homework and neck braking race to get into a professional college, students find themselves increasingly circumventing study of even assigned literature and develop no appetite to read literature widely.

Communication

Communication is the hall mark of medical profession – communication between doctor and the patient, communication among medical personnel themselves and communication between the medical profession and the outside word.. When we first meet with patients and ask them to tell us about their medical conditions, we're really asking them tell us their stories. What happened? What brings them to us today? What does their condition mean in the context of their lives? The better we can understand and relate to these stories, the better medical professionals we become.

Developing narrative competence is essential and like any other skill, our ability to elicit and share narratives must be practiced to grow. However, healthcare providers are already stretched thin with many competing demands and barriers to achieve narrative competence are plentiful and varied across specialties. A background in literature gives you the tools -words, ideas, mental approach to understanding narrating your patients' stories. Many physicians have turned to studying literature to groe their personal understanding of narration of illness. For physicians to read well written stories and to practice writing them , to polish their skills as readers, interpreters, and analyzers of words of others, and to force themselves to sit in the discomfort of sharing their own story, literature can be used as stepping stone to mastering narrative competence. Personal reflection, analysis through conversation, and vulnerability in sharing all lean on literature to take medicine to new heights. It teaches us to be flexible with our thoughts, allowing allowing people to challenge us and our preconceived notions - a skill directly translatable to the hospital environment. It allows us to understand our patients better, to treat them as people and not just patients, and morethan anything it allows us to remain human.

Burnout

Burnout, or exhaustion caused by overwork and stress, is a serious problem among doctors and medical students alike. Feelings of burnout include:

- Physical and/or mental exhaustion
- Feelings of detachment or inability to connect with patients

- Feelings of hopelessness or ineffectiveness

There are several ways to deal with burnout, including relying on a support system of friends and family members, as well as support from medical schools. And several studies have looked at involvement in the humanities—art, music and other ways of documenting the human experience—as ways to decrease burnout. Studying the literature provides one a strong tool to develop introspection and to deal with the outside world.

Cognitive empathy

Cognitive empathy, or recognizing and understanding the perspectives of other people, is another benefit of reading literature for the medical profession. Studying literature helps medical students understand other people by empathizing with characters and their struggles. “Zard Gulab” by A Hameed is one such example. It is a tremendous social and romantic story in which the author takes the reader inside the mind of the protagonist dealing with mental crises and ups and downs.

Writing

Reading becomes the stepping stone for writing. ability to communicate through Reading, writing, listening, and speaking as four skills that all medical professionals should possess to be effective in their profession. First and foremost, writing in a legible manner is imperative for good clinical practice and poor prescribing and documenting can have harmful consequences for the patient.1 The ability to write effectively is also an important medium in conveying complex scientific concepts, critical clinical information and conveying the patient’s thoughts and feelings for effective remedy. A solid background in literature provides the backdrop for all this.

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek doctor who’s considered the father of modern medicine, once wrote: “Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.” At its core, being part of the medical profession involves caring for patients, understanding where they’re coming from, and applying our skills to serve their needs. Study of literature provides you philosophical and psychological basis to tread on this path with confidence and honor.