ABSTRACT

This Humanities in Medicine article is an examination of the use of formal fine arts training in medical curricula to enhance diagnostic skills. A great amount can be discerned about pathology and pathophysiology using visual cues. Conventional medical education stresses the importance of physical diagnostic skills but often omits explicit teaching on how to methodically observe for information that could be useful for diagnosis. The current curriculum could be greatly complemented by the study of fine arts, which deals directly with the careful observation, description, and interpretation of the visual world.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article sur la médecine et les humanités est un aperçu sur la pertinence d’incorporer une formation formelle des beaux-arts dans le curriculum médical afin d’optimiser l’habileté des cliniciens à poser un bon diagnostic. L’utilisation de repères visuels est d’une grande utilité pour discerner la pathologie et la physiopathologie de différentes maladies. L’éducation médicale conventionnelle souligne l’importance de l’examen physique lorsqu’on doit poser un diagnostic, mais néglige parfois l’enseignement d’une approche méthodique qui utilise activement l’observation afin de repérer des informations qui pourraient être très utiles dans le diagnostic d’un patient. Le curriculum actuel pourrait très bien incorporer l’étude des beaux-arts, car celle-ci implique une observation, une description et une interprétation du monde visuel qui nous entoure.
The study of fine arts has proven useful even when applied to works of art that do not specifically contain medical themes. When examining art that contained less familiar imagery and representations, such as surrealist and abstract pieces, medical students still experienced improvements in skills that would help them in clinical settings [6]. After undergoing a curriculum of three two-hour sessions that included abstract art, students reported that they were able to develop a systematic approach to the visual world and found that they were able to identify patterns more readily, a skill which would translate into improved ability to make connections between patient cases [6]. In addition to developing pattern recognition skills, studying non-representational art encourages creative, on-the-spot interpretation because of its dearth of familiar imagery. It is one thing to examine and analyze a work of art full of easily recognizable symbols, but it is another thing entirely to examine non-representational art and make rapid decisions about its meaning. This makes for excellent practice in decision-making and in gaining comfort with uncertainty. These skills would undoubtedly be useful when encountering new cases and navigating unfamiliar territory during medical training.

A great amount of information can be discerned about pathology and pathophysiology using visual cues. Conventional medical education stresses the importance of physical diagnostic skills but often omits explicit teaching on how to methodically observe for information that could be useful for diagnosis. The current curriculum could be greatly complimented by the study of fine arts, which deals directly with the careful observation, description, and interpretation of the visual world. By encouraging medical learners to spend time dissecting works of art in addition to the traditional cadaver, their observational acuity can develop and enhance their efficacy as diagnosticians.

REFERENCES
4. Pope R. Mr S is told he will die. The Robert Pope Foundation.