

Cultivating Empathy by Embedding Humanities in P.T. Education

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University of the Incarnate Word



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Objectives

- Understand why empathy is important in the health professions.
- Define the humanities and discuss their use in physical therapy education to cultivate empathy.
- Discuss the challenges of measuring empathy as an outcome of learning activities.
- Consider several practical classroom activities using the humanities in a variety of patient populations.
- Share successes and struggles among audience members with using humanities to cultivate empathy.





Recognition
Understanding
Comprehension Rapport
Insight
Empathy
Communion
Appreciation Compassion
Responsiveness





Why is empathy important?

- Deeper understanding of patient's needs
- Better adherence & outcomes
- More compassionate
- Less likely to be sued
- Connects ablest environment & emotional pain it causes





Coughlin JF. *The Longevity Economy: Unlocking the World's Fastest-Growing, Most Misunderstood Market*. 1 edition. PublicAffairs; 2017.





Empathy declines in school

Why?

High levels of personal distress

Demanding curricula

Declines most during clinicals



Can empathy be cultivated?

Theater Experiential Learning
Role Playing **Literature**
Communication Skills Training **Drama**
Reflective Writing
Motivational Interviewing
Creative Arts PBL

Yes.

Batt-Rawden SA, Chisolm MS, Anton B, Flickinger TE. Teaching empathy to medical students: an updated, systematic review. *Acad Med.* 2013;88(8):1171-1177.

Kelm Z, Womer J, Walter JK, Feudtner C. Interventions to cultivate physician empathy: a systematic review. *BMC Med Educ.* 2014;14:219.





hu·man·i·ty

/(h)yoo'manədē/

noun

Plural noun: **humanities**

1. the human race; human beings collectively
1. humaneness; benevolence
1. learning or literature concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy





Owen
WILSON

Jennifer
ANISTON



LIFE AND LOVE
WITH THE WORLD'S
WORST DOG

Marley & Me



Frankel, D. *Marley & Me*. [DVD]. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox; 2008.





Class Activities & Outcomes

Death & Dying
Spinal Cord injury
Chronic Pain





Death & Dying

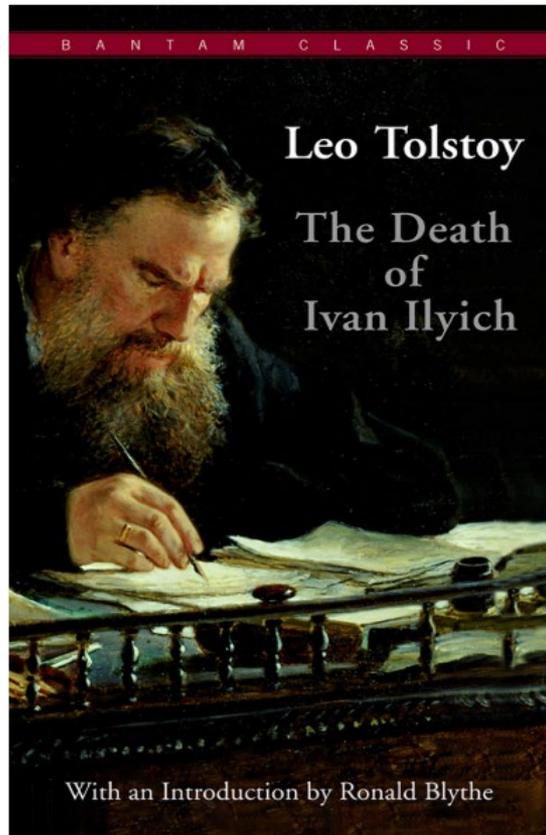
Step 1

Blog.



Death & Dying

Step 2



Tolstoy L, Blythe R. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Bantam Classics). Reissue edition. Bantam Dell; 1981.



Death & Dying

Step 3



Modern medicine is good at staving off death with aggressive interventions—and bad at knowing when to focus, instead, on improving the days that terminal patients have left.

Photograph by Phillip Toledano, "Birthday Balloon," from "Days with My Father" (2008)

Gawande A. What Should Medicine Do When It Can't Save You? *The New Yorker*. July 2010.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/02/letting-go-2>. Accessed March 25, 2019.





Outcomes

“I knew that there is more than one philosophy, but I now realize that you can change philosophies depending upon the context of the situation.”

“I will also practice with care ethics to answer the question ‘how can I be an excellent PT?’ I need to know when I am focusing too much on my excellence instead of focusing on needs of my patients – this way I will provide the best care to my patients.”

“I realize the importance of setting aside preconceived notions of right and wrong and truly evaluating pros and cons of many different options. I believe that exposing us to this material before our professional careers even begin will help us to develop a more mature perspective on the toughest issues in life, and our experience will allow us to serve our patients in the best way possible.”



Spinal Cord Injury

Step 1



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZL7L26F66Q>



Spinal Cord Injury

Step 2

Blog.



Spinal Cord Injury

Step 3

**Class
Discussion**





Outcomes

- Students can identify correct response on a multiple choice exam and they understand that this is part of their role
- Interactions with patients in our Patient-Client Management lab and Community Clinic have mixed results.



Chronic Pain

- I move away from this place
In the form of a disturbance
And enter into the world
Like some tiny distortion
- If I surrender
And I don't fight this wave
I won't go under
I'll only get carried away
- Wave
Wave
Wave
- Isolation
Isolation
Isolation
Isolation



Discussion Board

- Find a piece of artwork that was created by a person that was meant to represent their pain experience.
- Not emotional pain
- Not intellectual pain
- Not someone else's pain
- Sculpture
- Painting
- Music
- Show
- Movie
- Dance
- Poetry



Discussion Board-Submissions



- Student response:
- This piece made me think of physical pain because of the shadows that are casted on the body by her hands. The shadows stuck out to me because they could be interpreted as a cage that holds her prisoner to her pain. We can see the scars, but not how they make her feel like a prisoner.



Discussion Board-Submissions

Student Response:



- This is how grief physically feels and the more I thought about it the more I connected it to pain as well. When we are in chronic pain, it makes it hard to get up and go through the day knowing it's going to be full of pain. It makes us feel heavy and weighed down to the point some don't even want to live any more.



Empathy and Implicit Bias Instructional Strategy

Grant funded by the
Texas Physical
Therapy Foundation.

Purpose of Study

- Increase student empathy towards people with chronic pain and/or disability
- Decrease student bias towards people with chronic pain and/or disability
- Check for correlation between measures of empathy and implicit bias
- Assess students' perceptions of a humanities activity.





Measures

Jefferson Scale of
Empathy-Health
Professionals
Student Version
(JSE-HPS)

Implicit Association
Test- for people with
disabilities (IAT)



Findings

Empathy

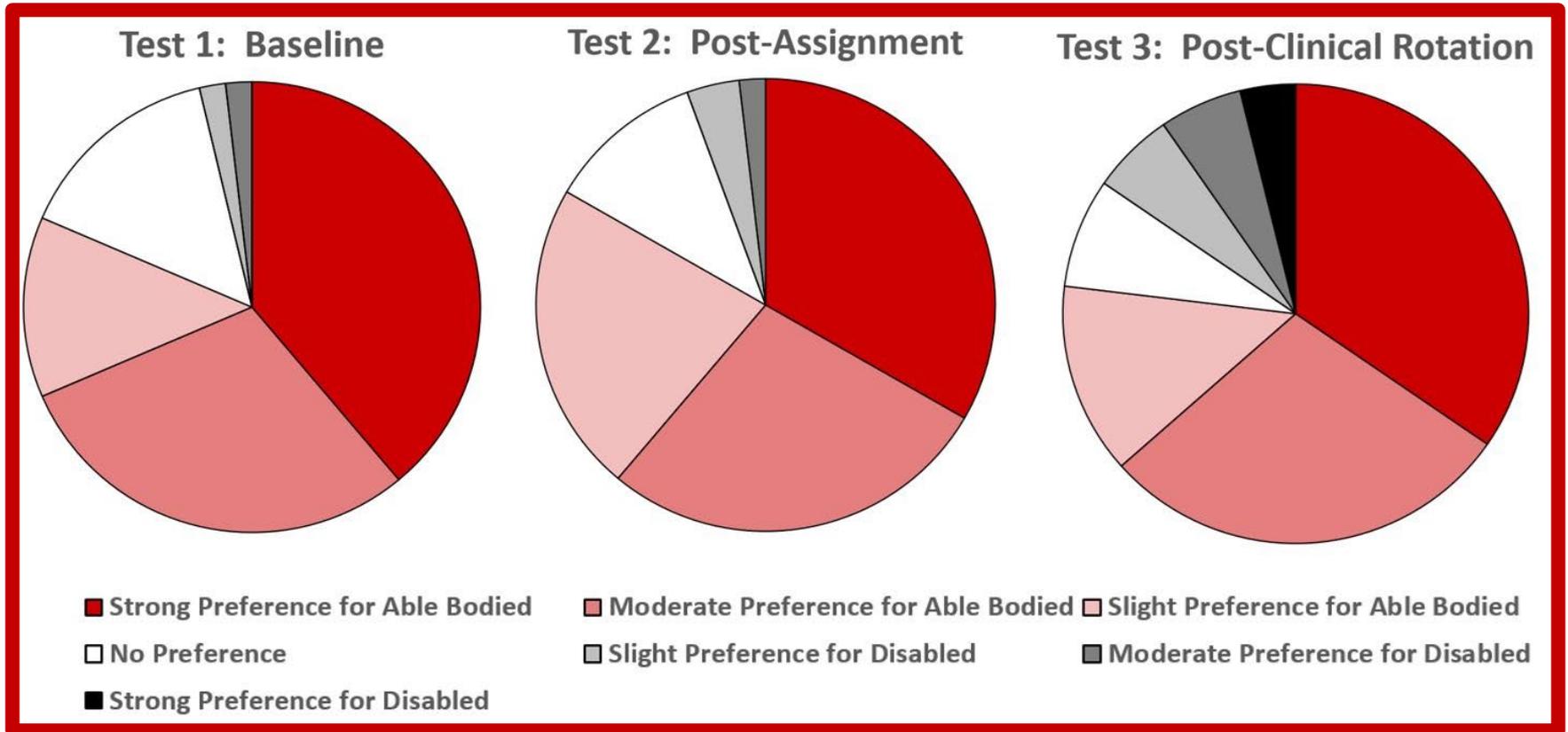
- There were significant changes for individuals on the JSE-HPS, but not for the mean across collection dates.
- High self-rating and variety of clinical experiences limited the study's ability to pick up group changes in empathy.
- Changes may have been educational rather than statistical

Implicit Bias

- There was a statistically significant increase in IAT scores (reduced bias) in the 19-27 year-old participant age group (94% of the cohort) from baseline scores to post-clinical experience.
- When students over the age of 27 (n=4) were added to the group, the mean change was not significant.
- Measures both correlate



Changes in Implicit Bias



What did the students think?

1= Strongly Disagree

7=Strongly Agree

- The AoP lesson will help me to empathize with patients in chronic pain.
5.79
- The AoP lesson will help me to empathize with patients with disabilities.
5.68
- The AoP lesson changed how I thought about patients in chronic pain.
5.51
- The AoP lesson changed how I thought about patients with disabilities.
5.12
- The AoP lesson was an effective learning activity/tool.
5.90
- Looking at art helped me to connect with the patient's lived experience.
5.72





Now What?



What ideas do you have?



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