Cultivating Empathy by Embedding Humanities in P.T. Education

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https://www.acapt.org/about/our-leadership/consortium/consortium-for-the-humanities-ethics-and-professionalism-(chepl)
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.
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
Empathy declines in school

Why?

High levels of personal distress
Demanding curricula
Declines most during clinicals
Can empathy be cultivated?

Yes.


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
Class Activities & Outcomes

Death & Dying
Spinal Cord injury
Chronic Pain
Death & Dying

Step 1

Blog.
Death & Dying

Step 2

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)


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
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
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.
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

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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

Test 1: Baseline

Test 2: Post-Assignment

Test 3: Post-Clinical Rotation

- Strong Preference for Able Bodied
- Moderate Preference for Able Bodied
- Slight Preference for Able Bodied
- No Preference
- Slight Preference for Disabled
- Moderate Preference for Disabled
- Strong Preference for Disabled
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?
References


References


