The objective of the MSUCHM Writing Lab is to create a third-space in a digital environment that would allow for seamless integration from campus to campus in which students can explore through narrative writing as reflective action who they are and who they are becoming as emerging physicians. This third space will also allow students to critically examine the practice of medicine as a systemized construct that requires a humanistic approach to providing clinical care in an ever-changing society. It will also provide a space for students to critically examine themselves as emerging physicians and their own pathos, ethos, and logos balancing agency and power relationships in the medical/clinical experience.

Curriculum Objectives

The creation of a required online Inclusion Writing Lab component in the MSUCHM curriculum would offer first-year medical school students an opportunity to practice writing as reflective action using the “interactive inquiry” studio model through narrative approaches to enhance their learning (Grego, Thompson). The studio narrative model using various writing voices would allow students to work in facilitated small group learning sessions in the Writing Lab to explore critical issues geared toward a broadly defined goal of increasing inclusive awareness. This includes but is not limited to:

- Exploration of inclusion and cultural competence issues in medical/clinical experiences across personal and patient life experiences including orientation, gender, socio-economic, race and ethnicity, and religion
- Development and exploration of medical discourse and agency in professionalizing medical/clinical experiences
- Development and exploration of empathy and critical thinking and problem-solving skills driven in an inclusion framework during the formative first-year of medical school

Rationale

The Inclusion Writing Lab is a 1-3 credit required online modules for all first-year medical school students. The core Writing Lab modules will include:

- **Narrative Medicine: Practicing Medicine in Inclusive Places**
  - Exploration of narrative or first-person experiences of patients from underserved/underrepresented backgrounds
  - Short stories, recorded interviews, guest speakers, illness narratives in poetry, essay, and other forms
  - Students develop skills of close reading, reflective writing as action, and cultural competence and awareness

- **Narrative Medicine: Medical School Students as Writers**
  - An approach to developing agency, and/or positionality during training and clinical skills development through writing as reflective action.
  - Students will explore their training and professionalizing experiences using the writing genres of creative-non-fiction, fiction, memoir, and prose

- **Narrative Medicine: Constructing and Deconstructing Illness Experiences Toward Building Empathy**
  - In-class writing prompts and journaling about issues in illness narratives that surround hearing, receiving, and honoring illness narratives including ethics of representation in illness narratives
  - Training on how to attend to different inclusion issues patients may present
  - Students will develop empathetic listening skills and critical thinking skills to better understand life and illness experiences of others

**Second-Year Advanced Writing Lab Selectives**

After the required first-year Writing Lab experience, students may want to expand their writing skills and reflective practices:

- Advanced Writing Support: Peer and faculty workshop approach to developing publications for academic and/or medical journals and other publishing opportunities
- Advanced Creative Writing Seminar: Workshop style allowing students to write about their patient encounters in creative ways: prose, lyric/verse, blogs, journals, essays, etc.
- Advanced Close Reading for Inclusion and Cultural Competence: Popular culture, digital mediums, examples of lived experiences and reflective writing as agents of change: political, medical, and social

Description of Curriculum

Resource and Faculty Development

- Faculty resources and development
  - Facilitation training and workshop training in collaboration with MSU Writing Center and WIDE team
  - Train the trainer or shadowing opportunities for Faculty and Writing Mentors

Discussion

The integration and prominence of writing in medical school curriculums is not new, but has proven to be an integral part to learning and exploring the self. The creation of the third space as identified by Grego and Thompson in their work can be applied here in the proposed MSUCHM Online Inclusion Writing Lab to provide students a space in which they can challenge systematic structures and explore themselves as physicians in training. The proposed Inclusion Writing Lab could be a writing-across the first-year medical school curriculum focused on clinical skills development or could be an addition to the medical humanities offerings and selectives of the College.

Through the Inclusion Writing Lab experiences proposed here, students will be in the position to emote and process their training experiences including the triad relationship of doctor, patient, and medical student. This proposed curriculum could promote students early on to be self and world-aware within the context of providing inclusive health care. Researchers note, “Race, gender, and other embodied sources of identity of practitioners and patients have been shown to influence the nature of clinical communication,” (DasGupta, 351). Each Writing Lab experience seeks to locate lived experiences and the witnessing of illness by physicians in training. These teachable moments taught as reflective action provide a way in which medical school students can advance their humanistic knowledge alongside their scientific knowledge.

References


