



Cinemedicine: Using movies to improve students' understanding of psychosocial aspects of medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: There are rising concerns about how to teach psychosocial aspects of medicine to students. The aim of the study was the use of “cinemedicine” as a tool and technique in teaching psychosocial aspects of medicine to medical students at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS).

Methods: This was an educational study with quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Two hundred seventy medical students participated in this study. Nine sessions were held to teach psychosocial subjects in medicine using movies. Each session began with an initial explanation of the program objectives. After the show, medicine related points of the movie were discussed and analyzed by experts and students. In the end, questionnaires were distributed to assess the students' perceptions.

Results: The results of our study show that most of the students (84%) stated that teaching these subjects through movies was a nice event comparing to usual lectures. 56.5% of the students agreed with the application of points learned in the events in professional performance. The majority of the students (72.8%) agreed that participating in those events was useful for them as a physician and they would advise other students to attend to later sessions. Content analysis of the students' notes uncovered three categories of cinemedicine: “learning by observation”, “creation of a supportive and tangible learning” and “motivation for learning”.

Conclusion: Cinemedicine provides the opportunity for medical students to learn psychosocial subjects related to medicine through observing and reflecting on movies.

1. Background

Along with the shift toward reforming medical curricula, there are rising concerns about maintaining professional values of future physicians and how humanistic and psychosocial aspects of medicine can be taught and improved during their education [1–3]. Undoubtedly, addressing these concerns requires providing opportunities for medical students to learn about humanity from the medical perspective. Hence, many medical schools around the world have started to pay more attention to helping students to build a humanistic perspective of doctoring as necessary competencies for becoming a good physician [4–6]. Humanism, known as the art of medicine, can be defined as a system of

values, attitudes, and behaviors that act as the basis of the physician's contract with patients and the way of integrating the psychosocial with the biomedical aspects of care [1,7]. Those doctors who practice humanistic care, show respect for every single patient and address their values, concerns, and needs [7].

It is obvious that reaching out for all aspects of humanity and psychosocial subjects cannot be achieved with the formal curriculum as a certain module and in a limited time frame. Although it is difficult to teach such topics due to their complexity, they need to be taught anyway [8]. This involves not only to use suitable knowledge and skill, but also a change of students attitudes [9] where conventional teaching methods are less likely to meet the expected outcomes.

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Table 1
The details on selected movies.

Movies	Year	Genre	The story
The doctor	1991	Drama	The Doctor is loosely based on Dr. Edward Rosenbaum's 1988 book, <i>A Taste Of My Own Medicine</i> . The film stars William Hurt as Jack MacKee, a doctor who undergoes a transformation in his views about life, illness and human relationships.
Something the Lord made	2004	Drama	Something the Lord Made is a film about the black cardiac pioneer Vivien Thomas and his complex and volatile partnership with white surgeon Alfred Blalock, the world famous “Blue Baby doctor” who pioneered modern heart surgery.
The brain (Hangul)	2011	medical drama	The brain, is a South Korean medical drama, revolves around a top neurosurgeon who is obsessed with success and dreams of becoming the hospital director, then finds himself embroiled in professional rivalries and an unexpected romance
The physician (Der Medicus)	2013	drama, historical, adventure	The film focuses on an orphan from an 11th-century English town whose mother died of a mysterious illness. The boy vows to study medicine and decides to travel to Persia.
Sicko	2007	Documentary	Documentary film by American filmmaker Michael Moore; investigates USA focusing on its health insurance and pharmaceutical industry, comparing the for-profit, non-universal U.S. system with the non-profit universal health care systems of Canada, UK, France & Cuba.
Today	2014	Drama	Today is an Iranian drama film. The film focuses on a retired taxi driver who will help a pregnant woman at the end of a working day to reach the hospital. Unaware that there are many things in the hospital waiting for him.
Still Alice	2014	Drama	Still Alice is an American independent drama film. The film stars Julianne Moore as Alice Howland, a linguistics professor diagnosed with familial Alzheimer's disease shortly after her 50th birthday.
Bubble boy	2001	Drama	A young man who was born without an immune system and has lived his life within a plastic bubble in his bedroom finds out that the woman he has loved since childhood is about to be married at Niagara Falls, so he builds a portable bubble suit and ventures into the outside world to win her affections.
Patch Adams	1998	Comedy drama	It is a comedy-drama film starring Robin Williams. Directed by Tom Shadyac, it is based on the life story of Dr. Hunter “Patch” Adams and the book <i>Gesundheit: Good Health is a Laughing Matter</i> by Adams and Maureen Mylander.

Evidences shows that it is very efficient to use interactive teaching techniques such as cinemedicine, which means using movie clips or screening whole movies for educating residents and medical students in the psychosocial aspects of medicine [10,11] [12]. The use of cinemedicine is useful in both building a humanistic perspective of doctoring and increasing students' motivation, engagement, and learning [13–15]. Furthermore, cinemedicine has unique features that make it an excellent tool for reinforcing professionalism, ethical issues, communication skills, and etc. [16,17].

This study reports our experience in using “cinemedicine” as a tool to facilitate teaching of psychosocial aspects of health care as part of an undergraduate medical curriculum at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS). The aim of this study was to determine if undergraduate medical education competencies as listed in TUMS [18] can be found in movies; and to propose a template for teaching by these movies. The study aim is to provide a model of how movies could be fitted into a framework of competencies of undergraduate medical education.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study context

In 2011, Tehran University of Medical Sciences alongside the reform of the undergraduate medical curriculum considered reinforcing psychosocial aspects of health care in terms of the expected competencies that medical students will be involved with throughout their educational course. It defines eight main competencies of undergraduate medical education: “clinical skills”, “communication skills”, “patient management”, “personal development”, “professionalism and medical ethics”, “decision-making, reasoning and problem-solving”, “prevention and health promotion” and “role of the physician in healthcare system”. Building and reinforcement of these competencies is not easily achieved; several interactive teaching techniques such as using movies, paintings, and other artistic works have been used in reforming undergraduate medical curriculum at TUMS. Art and Media in Medical Education Office (AMMEO) with the objective of helping to teach psychosocial subjects related to medicine was established in 2012 at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS). This office planned and implemented different activities by using art and media for teaching professionalism, ethics, communication, psychology, and clinical skills,

etc., as an optional program for students.

2.2. Participants

This was an educational study carried out from February 2013 to June 2015. Two hundred seventy medical students of TUMS participated in this study. Sixty-eight percent of respondents were female and 93% were single.

2.3. Course design

This project is an extracurricular experience that has been held by Art and Media in Medical Education Office (AMMEO) for 3 years. We describe our experiences in use of cinemedicine for teaching psychosocial aspects of medicine as an optional course. We invited faculty members who have expertise and interest in this field as the expert panel. Next, the taskforce conducted a survey to identify a series of movies related to ethical, social, and psychological issues related to medicine. We asked the experts to provide us with a list of suggested movies. The movie was chosen by the following criteria [1]: The main theme of each movie was medicine [2] All of the movies contained several aspects of professional behaviors [3] The content of each movie pertained to knowledge that students learned in their formal course [4] It stimulated discussion and reflection. In the following phase, the authors watched the suggested movies and wrote a short outline of each one. Based on the expected goals and specified timetables, different programs were planned and implemented. The specific movie for each session was chosen according to the topic of each session.

2.4. Procedure

After the survey by the working group, nine movies with bio psychosocial issues of medicine such as; *the doctor*, *Something the Lord made*, *the brain*, *the physician*, *Sicko*, *Today*, *Bubble boy*, *Patch Adams*, and *Still Alice* were screened for each sessions (Table 1).

The movies contain many scenes that highlight different aspects of being a good physician (Table 2). Nine sessions were held for teaching psychosocial subjects related to medicine using movies separately. The duration of each session varied from 3 to 4 h. Since most of the students were not familiar with using movies as a teaching tool, the first step was

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