

The Humanities in Our Lives

THE VALUE OF HUMANITIES IN MEDICINE

While the humanities are often juxtaposed with the medical sciences, recent work shows important areas of connection. Humanities majors who take the Medical College Admissions Test perform equal to or better than science and math majors. And a growing body of evidence indicates that art observation training in medical school enhances a doctor's diagnostic skills, with studies in the U.S. and U.K. showing significant improvements in diagnostic ability. Medical programs have also started experimental medical humanities programs that have shown positive effects, such as fostering improved communication and empathy between physician and patient.

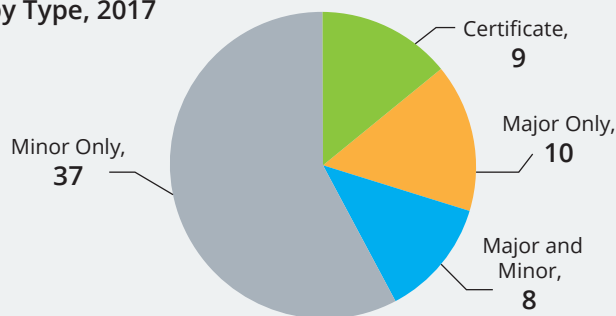
HUMANITIES AND MEDICINE

The humanities have helped define the medical profession for centuries, since the concept of bioethics was born in ancient Greece. Then, as now, physicians were required to take the Hippocratic Oath, which compels physicians to uphold high moral standards. Today bioethics is considered its own discipline, and 2,314 bioethics and applied ethics degrees were awarded from 2000 to 2013.

KEY FACTS

- In a scientific study, medical students with formal art history training demonstrated greater visual diagnostic skills.
- From 2000 to 2017, programs in the health humanities quadrupled, with 66 such programs now offered across 28 states.

Medical Humanities Programs in the U.S., by Type, 2017



INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

The **Program for Humanities in Medicine** at Yale Medical School includes art, music, literature, drama, writing, philosophy, and history. One study conducted at Yale found that medical students that participated in the art program had a 10% increase in their graded ability to visually diagnose patients over those that attended traditional lectures. Additionally, the program focuses on strategies for better communication and engages with the ethics of medicine.

"We strive to stimulate thought and discussion about the narratives we tell about our patients, ourselves, and the systems we work in; the traditions we have inherited; the role we play in questions of justice; and what futures we imagine for ourselves as a profession."

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

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