

Truth, Goodness, Beauty in Healthcare

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At Ochsner Health

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Virtue in Medicine

	Transcendentals	Truth	Goodness	Beauty
1	Virtues	Wisdom	Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance	Transcendence
2	Practice of Medicine	Science	Hospitality	Meaning
3	IMESO	Medicine	Education	Spirituality
4	Character Nominations	Judicious	Impartiality, Authenticity, Benevolence, Equanimity	Elevated Meaning
5	Functions	Thinking	Doing	Being

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Healthcare is growing significantly in fields of research science and financial acumen. Along with this growth, there is a need for efficient attention paid to patient care and spiritual growth. Many transformative programs have been added in the form of institutes in healthcare systems. They are charged with the impetus for this type of growth. At Ochsner Health, the Institute of Medicine, Education, and Spirituality at Ochsner (IMESO) was charged with transcendent and transformative growth in the life of healthcare. The title of the Institute at Ochsner Health is based on three tried and true transcendent concept words: truth, goodness, and beauty.

While each word is distinct in its subject matter and aim, each are interrelated to the other words. In this case, truth is related to medicine, education to goodness, and beauty to spirituality. Taken together, they stand for transformation in healthcare. *The transcendent aptitudes are critical in medicine.*

Alongside the significant attention given to truth and knowledge represented by research sciences and patient concerns in healthcare, the business aspects have come to play a very influential role in the practice of medicine. Employees with business acumen manage the tremendous financial benefits and costs associated with practice and the general management of healthcare systems. As a result, the quality and accessibility of care are becoming a great concern depending on insurance and benefits. In some ways, competitive business is affecting the quality of healthcare. One physician leader said, "Physicians in the United States are increasingly caught between the conflicting concepts of medicine as a humanitarian profession and healthcare as a competitive business."¹

Healthcare can be a complicated business because it has both humanitarian and competitive business involvements. There is no doubt that business acumen has a particularly key role in the practice of medicine. Healthcare delivery is a complex system with great costs associated with it. It is no longer a private fee-for-service business, but a system dominated by insurance and federal and local governmental support. It is also affected by political debate and legal decisions such as *end of life decisions and practices*. Even the Supreme Court has now been involved in the moral, ethical and financial implications of healthcare. Is it possible that healthcare has been subjected to so many outside forces that it has lost its transcend purposes? If so, how do we regain the original intentions for the practice of medicine?

Historians, theologians, authors, and philosophers have offered many value-based words to keep the professionals focused on the real purpose of medicine. Some of these words

are compassion, benevolence, do-no-harm, integrity, courage and many more that represent quality of care. The words truth, goodness, and beauty encompass many of the words that stand for the highest standards of concern and care in healthcare. Indeed, these three words summarize the “ultimate concerns” in any ways of life. They are called transcendental aspects, that is, ideas that transcend. Reflection on these words enable all to rekindle the discussion about the transformation of healthcare to meet patient needs and stay true to healthcare’s purposes.

The Institute of Medicine, Education, and Spirituality at Ochsner (IMESO) was started in 2011 and used the three interrelated words as the basis of its work among all in the healthcare system. Each of these words represents a distinct aspect as related to an important function. Medicine refers to the truth, Education refers to goodness, and Spirituality refers to beauty. The Institute is s to consider truth, goodness, and beauty in its programs and services.

Truth

In Medicine, truth is identified with knowledge gained through both the natural and applied sciences. Knowledge is composed of truths and is the resultant of testing and observation using scientific methods to describe and explain natural phenomena. In addition to experimental research and evidence-based treatment, the truths or knowledge about the human person are also uncovered through the study of the applied sciences, the results of which aid in the practice of medicine to provide for human needs and growth. For example, philosophers, theologians, sociologists, and psychologists design and implement research projects related to morality, ethical living, values, and many of other aspects of life.

The results offer a way of treating the whole person, mind, body, and spirit. Thus, truth in medicine refers to the care of the total human person and not only the body. The work of IMESO is to remind all about a major truth in medicine, which is to treat the whole person of the patient and guarantee holistic treatment for all professionals. Thus, there is research into areas such as workplace spirit, mission and values, and the acknowledgement of reciprocal healing to ensure engagement and meaning in the practice of medicine. To guarantee this treatment of the whole person, values and virtues are researched and taught to enhance the development of character.

The business and financial aspects in modern day healthcare are notable. Indeed, quality research is highly dependent on federal, state, and local resources. Because of this, finding the truth must be a priority in the business models of healthcare as well as in the provision of service. If not, the gap between medicine as a profession and a competitive business will grow at the peril of truth in the practice of medicine. The fact is that greatness in healthcare is not found on the stock market floor, in the halls of insurance companies, or in offices of law, but in the interaction between patient and healthcare professionals and in the research laboratories. Truth in medicine cannot be defined solely by pragmatism.

Goodness

While truth in medicine is the disciplined search for the truths found in nature and it this process that enhances the knowledge about humanity, goodness is deliberate integration into the heart and mind through education and modeling to integrate the knowledge.

The expression of goodness in medicine is core in the actual medical practice. Healing and comfort, both goals of medicine, are expressed through the integration of research knowledge and virtue-based words and behaviors offered in a caring and compassionate atmosphere. Virtue is the invisible motivator born of the integration of knowledge and education.

The presence of virtue in life is certified through the ages as an essential ingredient to live peacefully and hopefully. In the practice of medicine, as in ministry, the benevolent care of patients is paramount for good outcomes. The practice of virtues like compassion, kindness, courage, fairness, and wisdom are essential ingredients for all who all involved in medicine, especially the physician and all those who aid the physician. It is for this reason that the code of ethics in medicine includes education for the developmental virtues that guarantee “no harm” and compassion in its practice.

Medical and continuous education certainly involve what is found in research truth but also must involve the development of character leading to goodness of behavior. Physicians are expected to live virtues essential to just interactions and behavior, including fairness and good leadership. They are expected to be fully developed human beings who act with unconditional compassion and kindness, regardless of the reward or challenge posed by illness. They are expected to practice temperance so that humility is first with patients. They are expected further to respect the beliefs of their patients, regardless of their own beliefs about religions or faith practices.

The education of virtues leading to a well-developed character is certainly an important ingredient in medical practice. There the seeds of goodness are planted and reinforced in practice over a lifetime. IMESO is charged with the enhancement of character in fourth year medical students and others like nurses and administrators. They are challenged to reflect on their behavior and the behavior of their mentors about six major virtues so important to character in medicine. They are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each person is taught a method to reflect on actual experiences. In the process they begin to recognize the presence or absence of essential virtues and character strengths so necessary for holistic healing and have reciprocal experience with patients.

Thus, goodness expressed thought education is the integration of knowledge and virtue into practice in healthcare.

Beauty

Beauty in healthcare is an expression of one's spirituality in practice. It is thoughts and behaviors that are experienced by others. It is the response of a person or group that aptly benefits others. If this process is hindered by the more base needs of humanity like selfishness, greed, competition, need for power, narcissism, lack of charity, superiority, or injustice, then this interaction of truth (knowledge), virtue applied to knowledge (mind and heart), will not end in the expression of beauty or spirituality. Without beauty we deny the essence of humanity, which is to love, be kind, be reciprocal, interactional, interconnected, universal in love and care, disinterested in self-gain at the expense of others (the opposite of prosocial behavior and charity) and efficaciously benevolent. It really measures the way we love our fellow man and woman, respect the earth that we occupy, and give adherence to the author of all creation.

Beauty in behavior is expected of all who work in the healthcare enterprise for the healing and care of both patients and those who serve the patients. But how can this beauty be described in words? Beauty in healthcare is aptly described by accepted words and their proper virtue, such as healing (transcendence), responsibility (temperance,) respect (humanity), reputation (wisdom,) performance (courage), and non-maleficence (justice).

Indeed, all the words that are commonly used in healthcare have a corresponding virtue attached to them. Listen to words commonly used in medicine: autonomy, honesty, care, cost-effectiveness, feasibility, integrity, justice, and loyalty. Listen to words of beauty commonly used in administration: competition, compliance, fairness, profitability, transparency, and engagement. Each of these words are a way of expressing virtue in practice. Business aspects stress beauty most aptly in virtues of justice and temperance. Medicine stresses virtues of courage, humanity, wisdom, and justice.

The staff of IMESO has become expert at calling to the attention of all healthcare professionals the value of virtue and character development. This effort is considered under the theme of "Spirituality at Work." This attention helps to inform work with more meaning which in turn effects morale and engagement. The ultimate effects are resilience and better patient care. Patients and professionals find beauty even in the face of difficult challenges.

IMESO integrates truth, goodness, and beauty through researching the integration of mission and values in medicine, the development of virtue and ethical based education, and an openness to a spirituality which is associated with the goals of healthcare.

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¹ Noseworthy, J (December 5, 2019). The Future of Care—Preserving the Patient-Physician Relationship. N. Eng J. MED: 381,23, 2265