

the human being in room 4



WHILE PERSONALIZED MEDICINE HOLDS GREAT PROMISE, THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT THE HUMAN TOUCH WILL BE LOST IN THE MILIEU OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. THE SMD'S MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND BIOETHICS DIVISION IS OFFERING A NEW MASTER'S PROGRAM TO HELP A BROAD RANGE OF PROFESSIONALS STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE SCIENCE AND THE ART OF PATIENT CARE.

As a teacher, I have two basic aims: first, to give people the courage to depend upon their own eyes, brains, and emotional responses to "read" a work of art; second, to provide them with a technique that makes it possible for them to concentrate on an object for a long time — long enough to be able to memorize its essential elements and the relationship between them.

These are the words of the late Jane P. Norman, a highly regarded art educator and longtime consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. But substitute "work of art" and "object" with the word "patient," and these become the words Stephanie Brown Clark, MD, PhD, and her division colleagues live by.

Brown Clark is director of the SMD's division of Medical Humanities and Bioethics, which will soon be accepting students into a new Master's degree program in Medical Humanities. While the one-year program is already attracting interest from young physicians, it is not for MDs only. The department is designing courses that are relevant to nurses, advanced practitioners, therapists, pastoral caregivers, dentists, social workers, and any other professional who contributes to the health care of another human being. A participant's degree or years of professional experience will likely have no bearing on the electives he or she takes; everyone will be required to go deeper into one humanities topic, which will undoubtedly send students over to River Campus or even the Eastman School of Music.

Through their coursework, students will begin to discover how to bring the humanities — ethics and values, literature, history of science and medicine, and the visual arts — to the bedside to foster patient-centered care.

For example, Susan Daiss, MDiv, senior associate of Medical

Humanities and Bioethics, will take students enrolled in her course, *Framing the Field: Medicine Through the Visual Arts*, to area galleries. Daiss, who previously served as director of Art Education at the University's Memorial Art Gallery, will help students learn the art and practice of what art educators commonly call "close looking."

They will be taught to see art in unexpected ways, going beyond the obvious to draw out details that are vital to understanding the pieces, but easily missed by an untrained eye. They will also consider the time and place a piece was made, how it was viewed and treated, and what its current condition is. Applying this research, students will determine how an object's past adds profound meaning to its present.

"The process is, in many ways, analogous with the work clinicians do with their patients. It is like taking a history and conducting a physical," Brown Clark says. "We hope to help students develop a way of critical thinking that will lead them to look differently at their patients. They will be thinking about the background, the foreground, the history, and the small details that add up to the whole person."

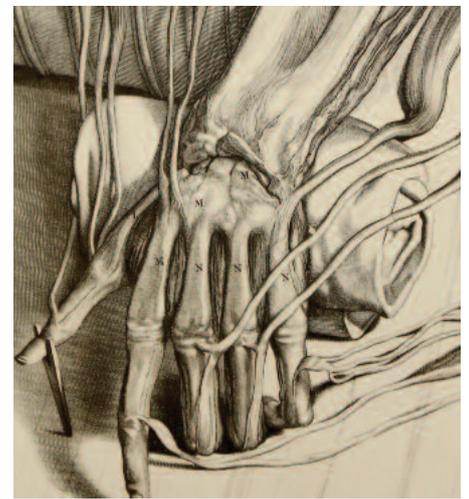
The program will also encourage self-reflection, inducing students to recognize how their unique values, beliefs, experiences, feelings, and limitations affect how they perceive patients and their illnesses.

"One of the strengths of medical humanities is it emphasizes subjectivity and the personal aspect of medicine. Objectivity and professionalism are important in the scientific practice of health care, but we also want our providers to be compassionate, empathetic, and insightful," Brown Clark notes.

That's not to say there is no science involved in this program. Students will receive instruction on research methodology and study design before launching their own research projects. Each project will explore a contemporary health issue through a humanities lens. Students will be challenged to collect data and draw conclusions, not always an easy task in this field. The goal is for students to uncover ways their coursework can be used to improve health, and to publish their findings.

"We're not teaching humanities for humanities' sake," Brown Clark explains. "I think of it as applied humanities. We're teaching it for the sake of the patient, the provider, and the practice of health care."

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Painting attributed to Hendrick Heerschop, *The Doctor's Visit* (ca. 1660), from the Collection of the Memorial Art Gallery