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## **How to Integrate Humanities and Social Sciences into Medical Education? The Experience of a National Faculty Development Program**

### Abstract:

Traditionally, medical education is focused on biomedical sciences and clinical skills. Recently, there has been a movement to integrate the humanities (e.g. arts, ethics, literature, history, philosophy) and social sciences (e.g. anthropology, cultural studies, law, psychology, sociology) into medical education. The emergence of medical humanities programs as an interdisciplinary field is mainly concerned with training medical professionals to be more empathic and reflective through humanities and social studies.

The incorporation of humanities and social sciences into medical education is especially important in countries where students enter medical schools at the undergraduate level, such as Asian countries. Take Taiwan for an example: high school students intended to enroll in medical school are put in a special track focused on the sciences with limited exposure to humanities and social sciences, starting from tenth grade. Medical educators are concerned that early emphasis on the sciences and insufficient coverage of the humanities would produce physicians with limited sensitivity to human suffering.

There has been a call for more medical humanities in medical education since the establishment of the medical school accreditation system in Taiwan in 2000. However, faculty members at Taiwanese medical schools are mainly specialized in the biomedical or clinical sciences. Faculty members specialized in the humanities and social sciences or with interdisciplinary backgrounds are few and marginal. In order to equip medical educators with the capacity to offer interdisciplinary medical humanities teaching, the Ministry of Education Advisory Office commissioned us to organize a series of faculty development workshops between 2007 and 2010.

Initially, we conducted needs assessment and surveyed the literature and best practices globally. Then we identified relevant topics and speakers, such as narrative medicine with Rita Charon. We worked closely with international speakers to make the workshop relevant to the local context, such as selecting literature familiar to Taiwanese medical educators for the narrative medicine workshop. We organized over twenty workshops between 2007 and 2010 and attracted over 3000 medical educators from all ranks (from lecturers to Deans), from all medical schools and teaching hospitals across Taiwan. Post-workshop surveys and interviews revealed high satisfaction and long-term application in teaching by the workshop participants.