



University of Wisconsin
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
AND PUBLIC HEALTH

FACES OF PATIENTS: First Lessons in Medical School

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Purpose

Hearing the patient's story is vital in learning the skill of medical interviewing. Early introduction of patients and their stories as part of the orientation to the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (UWSMPH) offers:

- Opportunity for humanizing a diagnosis
- Introduction of listening skills
- Role modeling in transition to medical school
- Establishment of the cornerstone of professionalism
- Recognition of the gift of a patient's story

Methods

In examining public health challenges, representative diagnoses were chosen. Standardized Patient Teaching Staff, UW Faculty and personal/ professional contacts provided a diverse compliment of presenting patients. These patients also demonstrated a comfort and ease in discussing the depth of their stories. With anonymity, patients began with scripted presentations including public health facts surrounding their diagnosis. Each presentation concluded with patients introducing themselves and inviting students to hear their personal stories. Small group discussion introduced students to medical interviewing and allowed them to see the "Faces of Patients" behind the diagnoses. The success of this activity was evaluated as part of the overall orientation process.

Results

Of the 158 respondents (96%), approximately 95% rated this activity as a "Very" or "Fairly Effective" experience. Suggestions from the students for improvement of this activity included longer time spent in small group discussion and the ability to interact with more than just one patient.

Conclusion

Early introduction of the "Faces of Patients" activity is a valuable and patient-centered approach to start off orientation of Medical School.

