

Keywords: prioritize the human touch

Problem: Advancements, innovations and progress improve healthcare in many ways. Medical marvels like joint replacements, heart catheterizations and metric monitoring are life changing. These tools allow people to enjoy life, laughter and love longer. However, patient-centered care requires clinicians to prioritize the human experience. Without compassion and a human touch, our technology falls short.

Solution: This article explores practical ways physicians can prioritize the human touch while utilizing medical innovations.

Prioritizing the Human Touch in a High-Tech Health System

Advancements, innovations and progress improve healthcare in many ways. Joint replacements promote mobility. Telehealth helps prevent emergencies. Heart catheterizations save lives. These medical marvels allow people to enjoy life, laughter and love longer.

However, patient-centered care requires clinicians to prioritize the human experience. Without compassion and a human touch, our technology falls short. Physicians must adopt the art and science of medicine to be truly successful. Additionally, taking time for reflection and embracing humanity allows physicians to nurture empathy. This article explores ways to prioritize the human touch in a high-tech health system.

Key Takeaways

- Medicine is both an art and a science. The science of medicine focuses on evidence-based practices, while the art of medicine embraces emotional expression.
- Expanding services keeps medical practices growing. However, taking time for reflection keeps physicians grounded. Both are vital.
- Embracing personal humanity can improve physicians' mental health and decrease healthcare burnout.
- Many physicians believe that survival in healthcare requires a disengaged posture. However, empathy is what truly sustains. Prioritizing the human touch is valuable for both the patient and the provider.
- The cumulative trauma from a life of medical service can lead to devastating mental health conditions. Providers who embrace their humanity are better doctors, co-workers and people.

Adopting the art and science of medicine

The science of medicine is vital. The standardization of medicine promotes empirical decision-making. Healthcare requires evidence-based strategies and technology to overcome illnesses. Patients need doctors who understand the intricacies of the human body. They need a surgeon who implements research-based strategies, like minimally invasive joint replacement. Patients want a cardiologist who stays current on best practices and innovative techniques. However, medicine is not merely scientific. It is also an art.

It is clear to see the importance of the science of medicine. But how is medicine an art? By definition, art is the expression of creativity and imagination. It arouses an emotional response, a sense of gratitude and an acknowledgment of humanity. **Art gives people a place to feel, a space to express. Medicine does the same.**

Physicians often forget that their presence fosters an atmosphere of openness. The patient-provider relationship is a unique bond characterized by trust, respect, empathy and confidentiality. This relationship creates a dynamic space for expression. The art of medicine is often undervalued and overlooked.

It is not uncommon for a stoic, guarded introvert to suddenly reveal fears and concerns. These people who share little with friends or family express openly with medical professionals. For many physicians, this response is humbling. Being the one a person counts on amid a crisis can feel overwhelming. However, this situation provides a unique opportunity for medical guidance and emotional support.

Physicians are trained to listen for the details. They know how to filter vast amounts of information to create a strategic care plan. However, *those who foster judgment-free conversations while getting the details are the greats*. They have learned the art and science of medicine.

Taking time for reflection

Medical students drink from the fire hydrant of information. Residents face endless nights and utter exhaustion. Physicians try to balance work and home life while paying off medical loans. Who has time for reflection?

Taking time for reflection requires physicians to wrestle with some difficult questions.

Many questions do not have straightforward answers. "What is wellness?" "How do people face death?" "What is a physician's responsibility to humanity?" These questions are not easy to answer.

Medical students write elaborate papers trying to capture these concepts. However, answering questions on paper is quite different from answering them in person. It is never easy to look into a patient's eyes and tell them they do not have much more time left. No amount of education can fully prepare someone for these moments.

As technology advances, physicians would do well to reflect on these questions. This time of reflection is a crucial component of prioritizing the human touch.

Embracing personal humanity

For decades, physicians have learned to protect themselves with a white-coat mentality. Well-marked lines of "them" and "us" improve professionalism. Right? The underlying message is that survival requires an unemotional, stoic stance.

Healthcare teaches medical professionals to develop a poker face. "Maintain composure. Avoid expressions of emotions. These are signs of weakness." **What if our so-called "weakness" is the very thing that makes us strong?** What if embracing personal humanity helps avoid burnout?

Research indicates that suppressing emotions and ignoring stress decreases mental health. This fact remains true regardless of profession. Yet, many physicians deny their humanity. They feel pressure to radiate strength and composure for the sake of everyone else. However, the benefits of embracing personal humanity include the following:

- Improves patient-provider relationship
- Allows physicians to address the stress
- Facilitates empathy

The white-coat mentality ignores the joy and fulfillment of sharing the load. Empathy is what sustains us: empathy for patients, co-workers and ourselves. The cumulative trauma of pursuing a career in medicine is challenging. Nurturing ideals and embracing humanity allows physicians to do more than perform a procedure. It enables them to make a difference.

Quality care that prioritizes the human touch

Innovation improves outcomes. However, medicine is both a science and an art. **As technology expands, we must never forget empathy and the human touch.**

Patients need access to innovative procedures. Our hospital delivers quality care that prioritizes the human touch. We are your partner in care. Together, we can advance medicine with kindness and compassion. Click the "Refer" button to get started.

Resources

"We Are Trying to Put the Humanity Back Into Medicine ... So, Why Do We Keep Removing It?"
British Medical Journal: Medical Humanities, 2023, We Are Trying to Put the Humanity Back Into Medicine ... So, Why Do We Keep Removing It?

“Unlocking compassion: lessons from a prison clinic.” KevinMD, 2024, Unlocking compassion: lessons from a prison clinic.