

## Human sciences?

*Lorenzo M. Capasso*

MIUR, USR Abruzzo, Chieti; National Commission on “Professional, Health, Environment and Economic development” National Federation of Medical Boards (FNOMCeO), Rome, Italy; <sup>3</sup>Chieti Provincial Medical Board, Via Spezioli, 31 – 66100 Chieti [lorenzo.capasso@istruzione.it](mailto:lorenzo.capasso@istruzione.it)

**Abstract.** This paper is in response to the Editorial by Professor Armocida about the theme of Human Sciences in medical education (Medical Humanities). The author thinks that this is a central topic and he reckons that all the involved subjects must gain consideration and be part of the medical curriculum in order to improve and widen not only the knowledges of undergraduate students, but also their skills. The author concludes suggesting a strong shift in medical education, promoting the introduction of a curriculum including medical humanities at the expenses of clinical subjects and to move practical training from hospitals to territorial services in order to learn how to face chronicity, comorbidity and disability.

**Key words:** Medical Education, Medical Humanities, Italy, Public Health

I read with great interest and with a certain satisfaction the editorial published in the last number of the journal. First, let me thank *Medicina Historica* and in particular Professor Armocida for having opened such a crucial debate on a scientific journal, overtaking the dark silence on this matter in the Italian academic panorama.

The theme of Human Sciences in medical education (Medical Humanities) is a central topic, the lack of such a mixture of knowledge has a serious impact on both clinical practice and research, and of course it resonates and self-perpetuates in teaching, generating new physicians devoid of these fundamental knowledges and skills.

As a member of the Monitoring Center for Young Professionals of the National Federation of Medical Boards (FNOMCeO), I had the possibility to study the problem of medical education, and this issue was one of the key points. In Italy we are living hard times with regards to medical malpractice, and international

literature widely demonstrated that improving the relationship with patients strongly decreases disputes. FNOMCeO hold a National Conference (*Formazione e accesso al lavoro. Innovare per garantire il futuro della professione*, Bari June 13-14<sup>th</sup> 2014) and published a monographic book (1) on these themes; in these occasions, both the vice-president of the Federation (Dr. Maurizio Benato) and I highlighted as human sciences represent the core of such an improvement of medical education. Among the subjects that should be included in Medical Humanities, we ought to consider:

- History of Medicine
- Psychology in Medicine
- Sociology in Medicine
- Communication studies
- Bioethics
- Health Laws
- Physician-patient relationship
- Team working and leadership in Medicine

All these subjects must gain consideration and be part of the medical curriculum in order not only to have physicians that acquired these knowledges, but that have actually developed the related skills.

Practical and basic knowledge that lacks completely in medical education (except from some, just one University as far as I know) is a class of “Introduction to professional practice”. In this class students are expected to learn basic skills related to their, upcoming, professional life. I am talking about: Medical Board requirements and functions, Medical Ethical code, Medical pensions system, but also very practical things as how to release a bill or which are the possible classifications and roles of a physician in the National Health System. The Monitoring Center for Young Professionals draw up a guide for young physicians (2) freely downloadable from FNOMCeO’s web page. A good moment to introduce and teach these themes could also be (instead of the sixth year of Medical school) the three month of post-graduation training, which is compulsory in order to undergo the so called “State Exam” (Medical license), but, once again this period is under University organization.

After these fundamental considerations I have to say that I completely agree with professor Armocida about the role of History of Medicine Professors (MED/02 scientific sector) that cannot absolutely bear all these courses and deal with all these different subjects. Anyway, I think that the only way to address these problems, that deals with future healthcare in Italy and its quality and sustainability, is to let Medical History Professors lead the Medical Humanities group of subjects. I really do think that they are the only ones that can face this task, because they have the

most humanistic approach and culture among medical professors, because they do be part of medical schools and medical departments and because they can lead a team of teachers (not necessary of medical formation) in order to clarify the target of their teaching work. Of course, I must conclude that University, each single seat and the system in the whole, should accept these innovations and understand that its role is to train physicians, and not to maintain themselves and a sort of lobby-style consortium. This strong shift deals with the introduction of a medical humanities curriculum at the expenses of clinical subjects and to shift practical training from hospitals to territorial services in order to face chronicity, comorbidity and disability. If we do not act this way, we are just training young dinosaurs, linked to a healthcare that has no reason to exist anymore, just because it does not meet population need and it is not sustainable any after. Are these challenges within reach of Italian University? Of course, they are, it is just a matter of will...

## References

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Correspondence:  
Lorenzo Capasso  
Chieti Provincial Medical Board  
Via Spezioli, 31 - 66100, Chieti  
E-mail: [lorenzo.capasso@istruzione.it](mailto:lorenzo.capasso@istruzione.it)