

Current situation and optimization path of medical humanities curriculum in different types of Chinese colleges and universities

Qin Li^{1,2}, Xue Li^{2,*}

¹Hangzhou Medical College, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, 311399, China

²Gachon University, Seongnam, 13120, Korea

*Corresponding author

Abstract: The development of medical humanities education in different types of Chinese colleges and universities is unbalanced due to their different histories and backgrounds, and the medical humanities curriculum plays a key role in the process of medical humanities education. This paper analyzes the talent cultivation programs of clinical medicine majors in Chinese comprehensive universities, medical specialized colleges and higher vocational colleges and universities, takes the cultivation objectives and curriculum settings as the core, conducts a comprehensive analysis and comparative study on the cultivation objectives, the number of curricula, the curriculum module settings, etc., puts forward the reasons for the differences in the curriculum settings of medical humanities in different types of colleges and universities and proposes the path of optimization. The curriculum is used as an entry point to solve the problem and promote the balanced and synergistic development of medical humanities education in different types of universities in China.

Keywords: Medical humanities education; talent training program; curriculum

1. Introduction

Medical humanities education is an important part of higher medical education, and its ultimate goal is to improve the quality and efficiency of medical services, promote the harmony of the doctor-patient relationship, and protect people's health rights and interests. Strengthening humanistic education in medicine can make medicine closer to the core concept of "people-oriented", thus solving the conflicts between doctors and patients from the source.

The Action Program for the Enhancement of Humanistic Care in Medicine (2024-2027) puts forward the action contents of enhancing the knowledge of medical humanities, improving the identity of medical humanities and implementing the practice of medical humanities, which further clarifies the importance of medical humanities education [1]. Compared with the developed countries in Europe and America, medical humanities education started late in China, and different types of colleges and universities present different status quo due to the history of school development, resource conditions, social needs and different educational concepts, but all of them have been actively exploring and constructing a humanities education model in line with their own schooling characteristics.

This study analyzes the reasons for the unbalanced development of humanities education in different types of colleges and universities and proposes countermeasures from the perspective of curriculum.

2. Research design

The educational goal of the clinical medical specialty is to "cultivate medical graduates with initial clinical competence, lifelong learning ability and good professionalism [2]." Based on this goal, colleges and universities have developed training programs for clinical medicine majors. This study takes the latest version of the talent training program of clinical medicine majors in comprehensive universities, specialized medical colleges and higher vocational colleges as the research sample, and adopts the text analysis method to comprehensively analyze the talent cultivation objectives, types of curricula and curricular modes in the cultivation program and conduct comparative research, and the specifics of the research sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of general information on different schools

Name	Program name and duration	Talent cultivation program revision time
School W	Clinical Medicine Program (five-year)	2024 Edition
School S		2021 Edition
School Y	Clinical Medicine Program (three-year)	2023 Edition

3. Findings

3.1 Talent Training Objectives

The change of talent training objectives of colleges and universities reflects the change of social and economic development on the quality demand of talents, and to a certain extent determines a series of talent training activities such as curriculum setting. Scientific and reasonable talent cultivation objectives are not only the fundamental guarantee to improve the quality of talent cultivation, but also need to be dynamically adjusted and optimized with the changes in the social environment [3]. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the training objectives in the training program, and mines the core vocabulary involving medical humanities education, and the specific results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 List of core vocabulary of talent cultivation objectives and medical humanities elements in different schools

Name	Core vocabulary of medical humanities elements
School W	--
School S	Good professional humanistic qualities
School Y	humanistic

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis: there are some differences in the setting of talent cultivation objectives in the training programs of clinical medicine majors of different types of universities, each with its own characteristics. School W have the widest range of talent cultivation objectives, mainly focusing on the cultivation of comprehensive and professional qualities. Although the core vocabulary of medical humanities elements is not directly involved, medical humanities education has been subconsciously integrated into the cultivation of comprehensive and professional qualities. The goal of cultivating talents in school S focuses more on the shaping of professional qualities and emphasizes the cultivation of "good professional humanistic qualities", but this cultivation is more for the purpose of better serving the improvement of professional qualities. In contrast, the personnel training objectives of school Y explicitly mention the cultivation of "humanistic literacy", which is in line with the reality that graduates of higher vocational colleges and universities are mainly oriented to the grassroots medical and health care career, and to a certain extent, they are required to have a higher level of humanistic literacy. From the above analysis, it can be seen that the personnel training objectives of these three types of colleges and universities focus on the cultivation of medical professional knowledge and skills, and do not place medical humanities education in an equally important position.

3.2 Medical humanities curriculum

3.2.1 Number of openings

As shown in Table 3, a total of 13 courses related to medical humanities were offered in the 3 universities. The following conclusions are drawn from the analysis: Medical Psychology is offered in all 3 colleges and universities, of which the reason may be that relevant content is involved in the physician qualification examination. In June 2015, the Outline of Teaching and Learning Reform of Humanistic Medicine Education formulated by the Joint Meeting of Heads of Medical Humanities Colleges and Schools of Medical Institutes across the country put forward that the humanistic medicine curriculum system consists of Introduction to Humanistic Medicine and Medical Ethics (viewed as a course). The curriculum system of humanistic medicine consists of seven core courses, namely Introduction to Humanistic Medicine and Medical Ethics (regarded as one course), Health Law/Medical Law, Medical Sociology, Medical Psychology, Philosophy of Medicine, History of Medicine, and Physician-Patient Communication, and is uniformly named "Theory and Practice of Humanistic Medicine" [4]. The History of Medicine and Medical Ethics were offered in school W and school S, the Module of Chinese Culture and World Civilization/Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture was offered in school W and school Y, and the Physician-Patient Communication was offered in school

S and school Y, which is in line with the conclusions drawn from the previous analyses of the objectives of the training.

Table 3 Number of medical humanities courses offered in different schools

Name	Related Courses
School W	Introduction to Humanities and Social Sciences Classics, Introduction to Chinese Spirituality, Module on Chinese Culture and World Civilization, Module on Art Experience and Aesthetic Appreciation, Module on Scientific Spirituality and Life Care, Module on Social Sciences and Modern Society, Module on Medical Ethics, History of Medicine, Medical Psychology
School S	Medical Ethics, Medical Psychology, Social Medicine and Health Care Administration, History of Medicine, Social Psychology, Doctor-Patient Communication and Skills,
School Y	Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture, Professionalism, Art of Eloquence and Social Etiquette, Social Responsibility, Doctor-Patient Communication (including Health Regulations), Medical Psychology,

3.2.2 Curriculum module

As shown in Table 4, the medical humanities courses are sorted out from high to low according to the composition ratio of education types and types of courses, which are, in order, compulsory courses of general education (literacy)/public foundation (4 times), elective courses of professional education (4 times) and compulsory courses of professional education (3 times), and the following conclusions are drawn from the analysis: different types of colleges and universities have attached a certain degree of importance to the education of medical humanities and mainly provide related courses through the form of compulsory courses to offer relevant courses. However, the curriculum of each university is closely related to its human resources training objectives and disciplinary background, reflecting different emphasis. School W is committed to cultivating multidisciplinary medical talents, so it take the Module of Chinese Culture and World Civilization as a compulsory elective course to broaden students' humanistic horizons. School S more focused on cultivating applied medical talents, and relying on their profound medical disciplinary backgrounds, it has made medical humanities courses closely related to medical specialties, such as Medical Psychology and Medical Ethics, compulsory courses. School Y emphasized the cultivation of skilled talents to serve the grassroots, and therefore set Medical Psychology, Doctor-Patient Communication (Including Health Laws and Regulations), and Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture as compulsory courses to strengthen students' communication skills and humanistic qualities. Although medical humanities courses occupy a certain position in the talent cultivation system of universities, their importance is still relatively low compared with that of specialized courses, and they are mainly presented in the form of general education (literacy)/compulsory public foundation courses and elective courses for professional education.

Table 4 Compulsory and elective courses of medical humanities courses in different schools

Name of school	School W	School S	School Y
Course name			
medical psychology	specialized elective	Compulsory courses for the general curriculum	Specialized Compulsory Courses
medical ethics	Specialized Compulsory Courses	Compulsory courses for the general curriculum	--
history of medicine	specialized elective	specialized elective	--
Doctor-Patient Communication and Skills/Doctor-Patient Communication (including Health Regulations)	--	specialized elective	Specialized Compulsory Courses
Module on Chinese Culture and World Civilization/Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture	General Studies Electives (mandatory)	--	Compulsory Public Foundation Courses

3.3 Analysis of the Reasons for the Existence of Differences in Different Types of Colleges and Universities

In view of the differences between different types of colleges and universities in the training objectives and medical humanities curriculum, combined with the school's disciplinary background and other analysis of its reasons are mainly the following three.

1) Talent cultivation goals influence the direction of medical humanities curriculum. Comprehensive universities focus on cultivating compound talents with interdisciplinary vision and humanistic qualities, emphasizing that students have the ability to adapt to future medical development and social needs while mastering medical professional skills, and their medical humanities courses have a certain degree of foresight. Specialized medical colleges and universities focus on cultivating applied talents with outstanding clinical ability and high professional ethics, and their curricula are more inclined to be closely integrated with medical practice in order to strengthen students' professionalism and clinical application ability. The talent cultivation goal of higher vocational colleges and universities is greatly influenced by employment orientation, mainly facing the grassroots medical and health care industry, focusing on cultivating skill-oriented talents, and its teaching content is usually based on the principle of practicability, so the attention paid to the medical humanities courses is relatively low.

2) Faculty strength affects the teaching and development of medical humanities education. Subject to the influence of operational mechanisms and other factors, medical humanities education faces certain difficulties for comprehensive universities^[5]. Under the discipline system of comprehensive universities, some of the disciplines that intersect with medicine are gradually far away from the medical school system; full-time faculty members engaged in the teaching of medical humanities are limited in their development due to the marginalization of the discipline. In specialized medical colleges and universities, medical humanities are in a marginal position compared with medical professional disciplines, with relatively limited input of personnel, funds and resources, resulting in the lagging development of the discipline. Although the faculty of higher vocational medical schools has strong professional skills, the overall knowledge structure is relatively single, and most of the faculty lacks medical humanities education background, and very few of them have interdisciplinary learning experiences.

3) Disciplinary background affects the breadth and depth of medical humanities curriculum. Comprehensive universities have comprehensive disciplinary settings, usually covering multiple disciplinary fields, and their curriculum systems incorporate interdisciplinary elective courses such as literature and art, so medical humanities courses are rich in variety. However, the content of some courses favors theory and is relatively weak in practicality. Specialized medical colleges and universities have a professional disciplinary background, which helps to enhance students' professionalism and clinical practice ability. However, humanities resources are relatively limited, which makes students' acquisition of knowledge in humanistic literacy somewhat restricted. Higher vocational colleges and universities have the most single subject setting, and the overall level is relatively low. Although the curriculum design is flexible to a certain extent and can meet the occupational needs, its academic nature is relatively insufficient, making it difficult to comprehensively improve the humanistic literacy of medical students.

4. Optimization of the path of medical humanities courses in different types of colleges and universities

Although China's attention to medical humanities education has improved significantly in recent years, there is still a gap compared with developed countries, and there is an imbalance in the development of medical humanities education in different types of colleges and universities with clinical medicine majors, for this reason, this study proposes the following optimization path.

1) Give full play to the school-running advantages to create a soft environment for medical humanities courses. From the perspective of the historical background of development, different types of colleges and universities have their unique schooling advantages, such as comprehensive universities usually have a broad platform for international cooperation, which can provide students with more opportunities for overseas exchanges, while medical schools represented by the United States have a long history of humanities education, expanding students' medical humanistic qualities through international exchange channels, and cultivating clinicians with an international outlook.

2) Combine the school's running characteristics to build a distinctive medical humanities curriculum. From the viewpoint of cultivation objectives, different types of universities have distinctive running characteristics, and medical humanities education, especially the curriculum, can be combined with the school's running characteristics to build a medical humanities program with the school's recognizability. For example, comprehensive universities usually have strong scientific research strength and strong research ability, so they can combine research and practice to promote the development of medical humanities education.

3) Based on the school's orientation, create a comprehensive medical humanities program on the basis of highlighting the key points. For comprehensive universities, relevant courses can be set up for the cutting-edge fields of medical science and technology and social development to broaden students' horizons. Specialized medical colleges and universities can further strengthen humanities education in clinical internships and simulation practices. Higher vocational medical schools can set up relevant course modules for hot issues such as doctor-patient relationship and medical ethics, highlighting the function of serving the society.

5. Conclusion

This study found that there is an imbalance in the development of medical humanities education in different types of colleges and universities in China, where different disciplinary backgrounds and talent training goals affect the curriculum of medical humanities programs, which in combination with different faculty strengths further affects the development of medical humanities education. Based on the analysis of three training programs, this study proposes an optimization path from the perspective of curriculum setting to provide reference for promoting the balanced and synergistic development of medical humanities education.

References

- [1] *Action Program for Enhancing Humanistic Care in Medicine (2024-2027)* [EB/OL]. National Health and Health Commission Website, Health News. <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/09-10-2024>.
- [2] *Teaching Guidance Committee for Higher Schools (2018)*. Ministry of Education. *National Standard for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Specialized Categories in Ordinary Schools of Higher Education (below)*. Beijing: Higher Education Press: 648.
- [3] Liu Yun. (2022). *Research on the current situation and improvement of medical humanities education in China's medical schools (Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral dissertation)*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Medical University.
- [4] *Outline of teaching reform of humanistic medical education (2015)*. *Medicine and Philosophy*: 36(7A):1-7, 10.
- [5] Jiang, M., & Han, L. (2015). *Reflections on medical humanities education in comprehensive universities--taking Wuhan University as an example*. *Medicine and Philosophy*: 36(7A), 24-26.