

The Medical Arts 16-17: Medical Arts and Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) Poetry & Prose Night Participant Reflections

On Monday, October 24th, students of the Medical Arts Program and the Helen Zell Writers' Program came together to explore the topic of "dislocation" as manifest in the literary arts. Each student brought a sample of writing (either their own composition or that of someone else) that resonated with them in regards to feeling alienated, or feeling distinctly out-of-place. With 37 people in attendance, we divided up into four tables with an even distribution of medical students, House Officers and Faculty.

Each table, which had between 8 and 10 people, was given a copy of discussion questions to prompt conversations regarding each piece of writing to be shared. One participant said that they "liked that there was a prompt and some questions to help spark discussion, but it was also nice that [their] dialogue wasn't moderated and could take turns as it went along."



Many participants were able to perceive thoughtful connections between the medical world and the evening's discussion. One student perceived that "most people care more about being treated as people than as patients, unrelated to how complex their care is." Another participant had a realization that "we all feel dislocated at times, doctors and patients" and "how integral that is to the human experience. However, it is not a reason to stop striving for relocation, nor is it shameful if we are left in a state of dislocation for a prolonged period of time."

While participants enjoyed all aspects of the evening, many of them particularly enjoyed simply being able to interact across the disciplinary divide, to explore commonalities and differences in people's fears and dreams. One participant shared that "conversation during dinner [was the most valuable part of the evening]. Shedding the garbs that define us as medical students, doctors or MFA students allows us to truly get to know one another, as human beings, much more so



than if we were to operate from our respective disciplines.” Another participant wrote that “just having access to the MFA students was the best part of the evening. They’re so thoughtful and full of perspectives different than what we encounter typically in the medical school.”

Overall, the event was well-received by both the medical students and the MFA students. Many participants said they would like to attend another event like this.

The Medical Arts Program is an initiative of Michigan Medicine at the University of Michigan.

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