

EDITORIALS

ARTS MEDICINE, ANY JUSTIFICATION?

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Introduction

Medicine is regarded an art as well as science. So, why is Arts Medicine necessary? It is defined as an integration of arts into medicine in order to promote health and also enhance the life of patients, their relatives, visitors and employees. Performing Arts medicine is an emerging branch of medicine that focuses on the special care of performing artists in relation to their occupation.¹ It may be regarded as a form of Arts medicine or Occupational medicine or an entirely different specialty.

The Scope of Arts

Arts is defined as expression or application of human creative skills and imagination; which could be expressed in different visual forms such as painting, sculpture or poetry or in physical activity such as dance and drama or in auditory form such as music and songs. The scope of arts includes the visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, creative arts and fine arts.

These further have subdivisions and the scope is further expanding. Arts serve as a way of self expression to the world, expressing one's imagination including political ideas, communication, entertainment and it can also serve as a ritualistic or spiritual function

Medicine as an Art

Medicine is as old as humanity, so is art. Medicine is also regarded as an art. Taking a history from a patient, physical examination, surgical procedures and counseling of patient and clients require mastery of artistic skills, not learnt in any formal art class but in medical practice.

In ancient times, depiction of the effects of different ailments and even when healers were at work could be seen on the walls of caves and buildings. Even today, fiction, films, poetry and drama depict health matters as humanity tends to understand them, broadening the human wisdom.

Performing Arts Medicine

Performing arts refers to physical activity done in front of an audience either for entertainment or

education. It includes music, dance, singing and acting. The entertainment industry is one that employs a lot of persons particularly in the Western world and is also faced with its own health peculiarities, has given rise to the need for special attention.

Performing Arts Medicine has spanned over thirty years in the United States of America and United Kingdom. Alice Brandfonbrener, who sadly passed on in May 31 2014 was regarded as the forerunner of Performing arts medicine. She was a physician that recognized the special needs of performing artists and founded the Medical Program for Performing Arts Medicine in 1985 in the Northwestern University school of medicine in Chicago. She also co-authored the first Performing Arts Medicine text book².

Performing Arts medicine has a multidisciplinary approach to health care including Internal Medicine, Dentistry, Orthopedics, Neurology and Psychiatry. There also an association of Performing Arts Medical Association open to health care workers interested in the care of performing artists. The group renders health advice to artists and also helps in proper referral to physicians and surgeons when necessary.

Arts Medicine-Justification

The common factor which links art to medicine is humanity, both have been in existence since man and each serves a useful function to man. There is no doubt arts have always been part of medicine, but why the emphasis in modern day medicine? According to Iva Fattorini, an international health physician and chairman in the Global Arts and Medicine institute at Cleveland Clinic, modern day medicine has lost the connection between healing and the power of the mind due to advancement in technology, thus there is the need to re-integrate arts into medicine which will be of great benefit to the patient³.

Visual arts display helps in provoking our emotions; it also helps to appreciate health care given in the past and present. It helps in teaching medical students and relaying of information in a universal form. The use of

insinuator, who are some sort of dramatists have aided clinical medicine. In literature such as poetry and prose, medical ailments have been described in ways a layman can understand; take for instance the poem 'The Sick foot' by Albert Kayper-Mensah helps us to understand the scourge of polio in a humorous way⁴. Recitation of poetry with focus on various health issues on special days such as World Health day as done by members of Seaview Poetry Club on radio in Port Harcourt has helped in appreciation of diseases and it has helped in health advocacy. The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine uses both visual arts and poetry to aid in learning of medicine. It depicts art works from famous creative and literary artists⁵. The film industry has also helped in understanding of various diseases and how they affect humanity

Arts Medicine – Institutions

Arts medicine has been given special attention in some health institutions in Western world such as Cleveland Clinic and Stanford Centre for Bioethics, Stanford University³. The benefits are to enhance of the health of the patients through the arts of healing, promote the well being of relatives, friends, visitors and even the employees through arts. There is also research into how arts and culture affect the quality of living.

Arts medicine has being offered as a course in the University of New South Wales in the UK since from 2012⁶. The aim is allow students pursue their interests in arts and social sciences while pursuing a medical degree. It also helps to broaden their knowledge of both arts and medicine.

Arts medicine in Nigeria

Arts medicine is not given any special focus in Nigeria health institutions. It is yet to be offered as a separate course in medical education, although in first year of most medical schools courses in humanities are studied. The display of art works can be seen in both private and government owned health care facilities either in form of paintings or sculpture. One of the popular art works is that which is seen on the premises of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital; the sculpture of surgeons performing a surgical procedure on a patient.

Television sets and cable network are usually provided by hospital authorities in the various wards. Patients are also allowed to have small portable radios from which they can listen to music. However there are no planned settings incorporating arts into medical care nor are there

studies carried out in most health establishments on the effect of arts on the health of the patient.

Nollywood and the entertainment industry had suffered loss of some its members due to various health condition. Performing Arts medicine is yet to develop in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The saying that fine art is good medicine is true thus Arts medicine and Performing Arts medicine should be explored and its benefits weighed in view of the Nigerian population.

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