

# HEART

Humanism in Medicine



## Soaring over Machu Picchu

By Paige Patterson, Class of 2012

The natural beauty of landscapes inspires me to explore and fills me with a sense of awe and wonder. The study of the human body is much the same – I am awed at its intricate workings and humbled by my place in it, inspired to learn everything about it.

This photograph was taken at Machu Picchu looking out from the archaeological site to the mountains rimming the valley. Paige captured the scene while on an international medical service trip in 2009.

## Fever

By Whitney Talbott  
 Class of 2013

Steeped in a heavy cloud  
 Night boils over  
 To drown us.  
 Feel your body sink into the earth  
 As sky and ground fuse  
 Within the belly of the darkness.  
 This is the night of anew  
 For all things.  
 The earth cracks wide  
 And the rivers boil;  
 The mountains shriek and  
 Pull their massive feet from the earth.  
 By morning,  
 It will all be back as before.

Words tumble and melt.  
 Drops of glacial sweat follow  
 The planes of cheek and chest,  
 Polluting the sea of white linen  
 Where we drift.  
 There is distant thunder,  
 Reverberating in your bones.

Someone lifts your hand,  
 Their touch is stony, cold,  
 A death grip;  
 Contrast the fire,  
 The heat of your own.  
 The damp air is heavy with life,  
 Breathe deeply, smell growing things.  
 Every tree and flower  
 Explodes in bloom.  
 The scent of wisteria and apple  
 Overcomes soap and bleach.  
 For a moment.

Morning shifts through the windows,  
 Taming the sea of linen,  
 Calming the quaking earth.  
 The black room turns beige.  
 Machines beep,  
 Medicine drips,  
 The storm breaks.  
 Then it is back as it was.  
 Before.

## Letter from the Editors

I have always been intrigued by the use of the term “humanism in medicine” to label the goals and projects of the HEART committee that promote empathetic and compassionate care. The original application of the word *humanism* was to describe a scholarly movement during the Renaissance that focused on the writings and ideas of the ancient Greeks. *Humanism* has also been used as an epithet for ideologies that advocate a moral code based on human nature rather than theological teachings. Furthermore, while the word has only been a part of western vernacular since the 1800's, *humanism* has been given many meanings and been applied (rather liberally) to various philosophies and ideas. The word, as invoked by the HEART committee, seems to have taken on a new meaning.

I figured, with its multitude of usages throughout *la vie du mot*, there must be a degree of discord as to what the term's connotation is within the medical context. In my own mini-experiment, I enlisted multiple students and residents as subjects to test my theory. I asked them to define in one sentence the meaning of “Humanism in Medicine.” Statistical analysis (or lack thereof) aside, I was surprised with the unanimity I found in the results. The definitions of

humanism clustered around a theme of medical care that focuses on respect for the patient as a person who is not defined by his or her disease. As medical providers, we assume responsibility for the pathologies that plague our patients. On a very basic level, by successfully diagnosing and treating patients, we have done our job. However, as the responses to my question indicate, we can incorporate *humanism* into our chosen service by taking the time and effort to know the person behind the disease.

Even though the results of my survey imply consensus about the meaning of “humanism in medicine” to medical professionals, one should not be so naïve as to assume that *everyone* who envisions a culture of humanistic medicine has identical views. To be successful in creating such a culture, especially in light of the numerous applications of *humanism*, we must remember to communicate with those working toward the same end, to unearth the differences in our perspectives, and to engage those who are not active in the effort. With this in mind, I look forward to the new projects, speakers, and other opportunities this year that will help bring our medical community closer to one in which humanism, altruism and compassion are as significant as scientific knowledge.

**Trish Todd, Class of 2012  
and Pradip Patel, M.D., Co-Editors**

## HEART Projects and Calendar of Events:

### HEART to Heart Session: “Pharmaceutical Companies’ Influences on Physician Treatment Choices” with

Kristine Kreuger, M.D.,  
Chief of Academic and  
Clinical Affairs

February 17, 2011

12:05-12:45 p.m.

K Building Room 2003

Contact: Alex Bajorek -

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### Gheens Visiting Scholars Lecturer Week:

March 21-25, 2011

Times and Locations TBA

Professor Laurence

McCullough

Baylor College of Medicine

Professor Stephen Wear

SUNY Buffalo

Events TBD

### Stambough Lecture: “I’m gonna slap those doctors”: Passion, Poetry and Medicine

April 18, 2011

Noon

HB-102 Instructional  
building

Kack Coulehan, MD, MPH

Department of Preventive  
Medicine

Director Emeritus

### The Gheens Foundation Visiting Scholar in Humanism: “Breaking Evolution’s Chains: The Advantages of Genetically Modifying Human Beings”

Monday, February 14

Noon - 12:45 p.m.

K Building Room 2037

Allen E. Buchanan, Ph.D.,

Duke University

## Humanizing the patient interaction through prose

By Ben Angel, UofL SOM Class of 2011

It is not always an easy task to get medical students to seriously reflect on their educational experiences. When a writing assignment came up in my first year of medical school I heard more than one exclamation of “I thought I’d never have to put up with this again!” When the time came to write reflection pieces in clinical clerkships our third year, however, there were very few protests. Why the change of heart?

The answer has to be patient care. Whether writing about a patient who was removed from supportive care during my Internal Medicine clerkship or reflecting on a particularly difficult conflict with my peers for a Pediatrics assignment, I had to stop and actually think about the people I spend my time with when I go to the hospital. When you write about a patient or their family, they become more than a set of lab values or an interesting case—they stay with you long after you come home for the day. After writing about our experiences, students not only develop important communication skills, we also start thinking about patients as *our* patients. This is a critical step on our journey toward becoming doctors, one you’ll find most of us don’t mind writing about.

## Gold Humanism Honor Society: Update from the ULSOM Chapter

By Sarina Sahetya, Class of 2011

Our GHHS members are already hard at work planning projects for the new year. In addition to planning service ventures, we are developing strategies to centralize volunteer opportunities within the medical school and to bring in experts on humanism in medicine for discussions with our medical community. This spring, Dr. Michael LaCombe will be hosting a series of events with the medical school and will be the guest speaker for an Internal Medicine Grand Rounds. Dr. LaCombe is a renowned physician, writer, speaker, and humanist, who has been practicing medicine for over 35 years. He has been an editor of “On Being a Doctor” since its inception in 1991 and has written numerous stories and books on the importance of humanism in medicine. Dr. LaCombe will host a lunchtime panel called “*All I Know of Medicine I Learned at the Movies*” for medical students and the medical community. Following the panel, he will show the taped performances of a few of his short stories called *Ethics from Broadway*.

The GHHS is continuing our alliance with the Public Health Department to develop an asthma education program for elementary and middle school students in the Rubbertown district. This program, called the Asthma Swim Project, is designed to combine education and fun. We plan to have sessions which discuss various asthma related topics such as understanding medication, asthma triggers, allergies, and smoking. After these sessions, the students will be able to partake in swim lessons. Along with the health department, we are getting help from the YMCA and JCPS to get this project off the ground. We are currently making great progress on all of our projects and look forward to promoting health and humanism within our community.

### ***Systole: Call for Writings***

Medical students and residents, please join us in creating a new edition of the school’s literary magazine!

Deadline for submissions is **April 30, 2011**

Entry forms, instructions for submission, and the 2009 and 2010 edition of *Systole* can be accessed online at <http://louisville.edu/medschool/curriculum/heart/systole>.

## Gold Foundation Biennial Conference The Power of Humanism: Transforming Our System, Renewing Ourselves

Three members of the HEART group had the honor of attending the Gold Foundation's Biennial Conference 2010 in Dallas, Texas. Plenary sessions, workshops, posters and roundtables: teaching, learning, networking, brainstorming and restoring ourselves - these were the hallmarks of the Fall Biennial 2010.

From the opening speech of the GHHS Conference, it was clear that I was in for a unique experience that would change the way I view medicine forever. I quickly found myself in the midst of 215 medical students, residents, and faculty members who were equally passionate about celebrating humanism in medicine. I found a group of the brightest minds in medicine who could get as excited about the patient as they did about the diagnosis. From workshops to poster presentations to small group sessions, the conference became a gold mine for developing new ideas, new contacts, and new aspirations. I accumulated dozens of emails and phone numbers from people who wanted to help me incorporate their projects in my medical community. I finally realized that the GHHS national conference was more than just a celebration of ideals; it was a call to action. I returned home invigorated and brimming with plans and ideas to foster an appreciation for humanism within our university.

### Sarina Sahetya, UL SOM Class of 2011

It was truly an honor to be selected as UofL's Resident Representative to the GHHS biennial conference. It was wonderful to be together with so many individuals personally invested in spreading the value of humanism in medicine. Great strides have been made in teaching and emphasizing the humanistic aspect of medicine during medical school, but based on discussions with other

Residents at the conference; we all agree that this certainly deserves more attention during Residency. Because there are so many competing interests during residency, it certainly can be difficult to give teaching Humanism the time it deserves. The predominant theme that our resident group left this conference with was to try to increase awareness within our Residency programs in order to dedicate more time to reflect and focus on the humanistic aspects of our day-to-day lives.

### Stephen Dinetz, MD, UL MedPeds Resident



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I was struck by the spirit of collaboration that characterized the meeting, with shared goals of mobilizing together to respond to the challenges in our changing world of health care. I am grateful for the connections I made with other clinicians and educators who are dedicated to the humanistic sides of medical student education. I learned about strategies to achieve and foster humanism against the background of the hidden curriculum, intercultural competencies, and the formal medical school curriculum. Dr. Gretchen Berland shared her award winning movie "Rolling" with the attendees. Many attendees were moved to tears by this film and will likely think about it for a very long time. This was a very powerful presentation that really let's us know that self respect and dignity are the responsibility of all of us. The HEART group, in conjunction with the local GHHS members, hope to share this film with our campus in the near future.

### Pradip D. Patel, MD, Chair of HEART