

# 50 YEARS OF HUMANITIES AT PENN STATE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

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# Where did it all start?

- Founded in 1967
  - First Department of Humanities to be included in a College of Medicine in the USA
  - Oldest Department of Humanities in the country

## 1964

George T. Harrell, M.D. accepts the invitation to become the founding dean of Penn State College of Medicine, which had not yet been built. A condition of his appointment was that he would be permitted to develop an innovative curriculum that included Departments of Family and Community Medicine, Behavioral Science, and Humanities.



**George T. Harrell, M.D.**  
Founding Dean  
Penn State College of Medicine

# Current Curriculum – Mandatory for all 4 years

## First Year

- **Medical Humanities**

- Explores topics such as empathy, suffering and resilience, death and dying, and the culture of medicine and medical education.

- **The Science of Mind Body**

- Covers topics such as meditation and mindfulness, trauma and defense mechanisms, and the physiology of stress.

- **Critical Thinking**

- The importance of metacognition/ reflection in critical thinking; sources of cognitive errors and influence of biases; intuitive versus analytical thinking; medical decision-making in the face of uncertainty; and awareness of conditions that compromise decision-making.

# Current Curriculum – Mandatory for all 4 years

## First Year

- **Patients As Teachers**

- Students are paired up a person who has a chronic condition and visit them multiple times through out the year in their home. The focus is learning about how a person copes on a daily basis with an illness.

<http://sites.psu.edu/patientsasteachers/>

# Current Curriculum – Mandatory for all 4 years

## Second Year

- **Medical Ethics and Professionalism**
  - Introducing learners to a variety of issues involving ethics and professionalism that arise in the practice of medicine, and to help prepare learners to deal effectively with such issues..
- **Communication**
  - Focuses on exploring: 1) assumptions and biases that impact communication 2) self-reflection and feedback as critical communication skills and 3) the value of interdisciplinary teams.

# Current Curriculum – Mandatory for all 4 years

## Third Year (Clerkships)

- Kienle Groups

- Students participate in small group sessions where they reflect on clinical experiences and explore how formal learning in Humanities can be challenged and reshaped by clinical realities.

# Current Curriculum – Mandatory for all 4 years

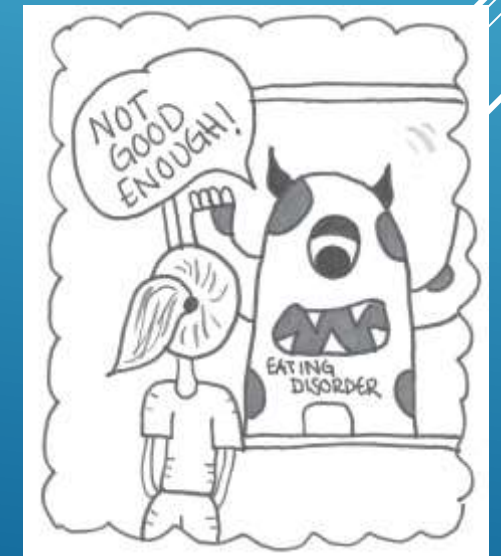
## Fourth Year

- **Selective(s)**

- In the fourth year, students must choose one of 12 – 14 “Selectives.” These are intensive, one-month courses designed to delve more deeply into topics that integrate clinical knowledge and experience with humanities perspectives. These courses include: Jazz and the Art of Medicine, Graphic Storytelling, Time Slips, Photography and Medicine. There are also selectives focused on death and dying, writing and literature, advanced ethics, and many others.

Holy Graphic Medicine, Batman!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=25&v=Gpi0pwEdSSM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=Gpi0pwEdSSM)



Additional Resources

Penn State College of Medicine

<http://med.psu.edu/humanities>

Humanities Up Close – Behind the Scenes

<https://sites.psu.edu/humanities/>





# Questions?



# Thank you for your time!