

Cultivating awareness of the Holocaust in medicine

Richard Horton's Comment¹ was extremely heartfelt, and we felt as if it were phrased in our very own words. For more than 10 years, the Integrated Curriculum for Anthroposophic Medicine at Witten/Herdecke University has been teaching medical ethics through the example of medicine in national socialism.² In 2017, in light of increasing concerns about dehumanisation in medicine, we strengthened our efforts and developed a 3-year elective interprofessional curriculum entitled *Cultivating Medical Awareness and Ethics through the Example of Medicine in National Socialism*. This curriculum includes seminars, individual and small group reflection on documentaries of survivors, readings on the history of medicine during national socialism and the Holocaust (including stories of survival and resistance),^{3,4} and study excursions to memorial sites (eg, Auschwitz or the Hadamar euthanasia centre). The health humanities component includes reflective writing, arts, and meditation (guided by author HSW). At the end of each year, students organise a public symposium to present their experiences within self-selected topics related to course themes.

Nowadays, students must be equipped with a moral compass that should act as a foundation to developing a professional identity⁵ for the medical and societal challenges that Horton describes.¹ How can we help students build this compass, foster moral development inside each individual, and exhibit reflective, resilient, and, if necessary, resistant behaviour? In our experience, visiting so-called dark places is core because it touches individual participants deeply; it implements a thought process that

might result in strengthened truth-seeking and striving to help overcome cultural, religious, gender, and other potential xenophobic issues that subconsciously influence attitudes and behaviour.

We declare no competing interests.

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- 1 Horton, R. Offline: Medicine and the Holocaust—it's time to teach. *Lancet* 2019; **394**: 105.
- 2 Witten/Herdecke University, Faculty of Health. *Ärzte in Auschwitz. Der Nationalsozialismus und die Medizin im "Dritten Reich"*. March 29, 2012. https://ibam.uni-wh.de/fileadmin/img/mehr/Dokumentation_Exkursion_Auschwitz_klein.pdf (accessed Oct 18, 2019).
- 3 Selg P. *Überleben in Auschwitz: Elie Wiesel–Ruth Klüger–Ruth Elias–Primo Levi–Viktor Frankl*. Arlesheim, Switzerland: Verlag des Ita Wegman Instituts, 2010.
- 4 Wald HS, Weiner CL. Deadly medicine: creating the master race. *Ars Medica* 2009; **5**: 48–57.
- 5 Wald HS. Professional identity (trans) formation: reflection, relationship, resilience. *Acad Med* 2015; **90**: 701–06.



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