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Nursing: The Arts & Sciences

When I was three, I started preschool. I don't remember much other than a book we painted as a class and a play we performed for our parents in which I received the starring role of Repunzel. When I got to elementary school, I was placed in an art class in the basement of the building. It was my favorite class. By the time I reached middle school, there was only one art class I could choose to enroll in. I took that and joined an after-school art club. Finally, in high school and now college, there is a wide variety of art classes, including film photography, book making, and watercolor, to name a few. I was finally able to choose how much of my academic time was spent on art, instead of a curriculum making the decision for me. This ability enhanced my creativity, prompted me to try things that I haven't before, and enhanced my attention to detail. I never realized, before this significant incorporation of art in my life, how unobservant I was before. Now, I notice the differences in the voices of the people I converse with, and the architecture and angles of buildings. Art allowed me to see the world through a completely different perspective that I don't believe I would have discovered otherwise.

The syllabi presented to students each school year is angled as purely academic, usually with one "mandatory elective" that a majority of students choose to be a study hall. The article, "Necessary Edges: Arts, Empathy, and Education" was written by the cellist and songwriter, Yo-yo Ma, who argued that art must be incorporated in school curriculums to the same extent as

science or math. I agree with this notion due to the monumental idea that from art, stems imagination and creativity; characteristics that will not only benefit individuals scholastically, but in all situations throughout life. In the nursing major, there is an unimaginable amount of information that needs to be learned and memorized. Jonah Lehrer, a renowned author who previously worked for *New York Times*, stressed that the arts are necessary in science. The inventiveness gained from art, in and outside of school, helps to acquire knowledge in new ways. However, in no way does art take full credibility for all that is learned in science. Steven Pinker, a notable professor in the psychology department at Harvard University argues that “Science is not your Enemy”, as his article’s title states. Pinker reviews criticism of science from both sides and claims that morality was very likely derived from science. As I gathered all perspectives from these three authors as well as others, I concluded that art is an imperative aspect in science, specifically in the nursing field.

In the medical world, every decision is crucial for the health of the patient. A course of action can not be determined by science alone. More importantly, however, is that the care provided is in the patient’s best interests. This may not always be what science tells us to do, but rather what that specific patient needs. “Necessary Edges: Arts, Empathy, and Education” by Yo-yo Ma discusses the importance of empathy and how art gives us this ability. Ma declares that “empathy comes when you understand something deeply through arts and literature and can thus make unexpected connections...[It] is the ultimate quality that acknowledges our identity as members of one human family” (Ma). Art enables us to understand things in ways that science can not. It allows us to capture a deeper grasp of concepts that would otherwise appear as a blur in our minds. This is how empathy is created. Then, empathy connects us through our emotions.

We can only truly understand what others are feeling by making this connection, which is imperative between nurses and their patients. In order to do what is best for the patient, plan their best course of action or treatment, this connection must be made. I once knew a woman whose daughter was diagnosed with stage four kidney cancer at the age of five. She stayed with her daughter at the hospital for over three months. She later told me that as appreciative she was of her family and friends who provided endless support, she didn't know if she would have made it through without the nurses. Her explanation for this was that these caring people were there for her day after day, aware of the hardships she was enduring, and with the skillset to help both mentally and physically. When I become a nurse, I want to be there for others like these nurses were for my friend. Although, in order to do that, I will need art to understand a patient's need and reasoning behind what they think is best, instead of making a solely science-based approach.

Art has developed immensely over time. The emergence of new forms of art is something I have learned a lot about throughout my life. It is fascinating how the style of art changes through time, even within a particular culture. It has come a long way from what it once was, similarly to the sciences. Science is a plethora of knowledge that has taken hundreds of years to build up and piece together. Steven Pinker published an article called, "Science is Not Your Enemy". It is here where Pinker made the statement that he often "long[s] to travel back in time and offer [the great thinkers of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment] some bit of twenty-first-century freshman science that would fill a gap in their arguments..." (Pinker). Pinker made the point that without all of the time we have had to further our resources and accumulate data, we may still be at the same place in science that we were decades ago. Another renowned author by the name of Jonah Lehrer wrote in his article, "The Future of Science...Is Art?" about a similar

perspective. Lehrer said, "the history of science is supposed to obey a simple equation: Time plus data equals understanding" (Lehrer), providing further evidence that progression in science is largely dependent on time. But it is when the art and science are developed and intertwined that real discoveries are made. An instance that portrays this is through the making of poetry. Our experiences are viewed through our senses which is not something we think about often. At some point in primary school, individuals learn the rules of grammar and their vocabulary expands. These processes continue and broaden throughout life. But art, our interpretation of things and our imagination, is what enables us to put our senses into words. This concept does not only apply to literary works. It is the basis of new inventions, discoveries, and science.

Without art, it is difficult to imagine where we would be in the scientific world. Would we know the things we know now? I believe it is highly unlikely, without the illustration of maps, the technology used in surgery, and the values behind arts integration. These are what lead to the capacity to innovate and further develop our understanding and application of the sciences. Ma, Pinker, and Lehrer all had well explained, processed thoughts on the importance of art in science. Each statement and claim had managed to sway my decision toward their direction. However, when taking them all into account and thinking about this concept in terms of my own life, I can ungrudgingly make the claim that art is not only beneficial, it is needed. There is only advantage in transforming STEM to STEAM, as well as taking full advantage of the qualities art provokes within the nursing field.

Works Cited Author(s).

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