

Letters to the Editor

The Landscape of Academic Medicine

In “The Landscape of Academic Medicine and Health Care in the United States” (*The Pharos* Spring 2020, p 3–8), the evolution of academic medicine was recounted. It was stressed that intrinsic financial support for medical schools dwindled, and reliance upon extramural resources from research grants and private medical fees correspondingly rose. Consequently, faculty clinicians have insufficient time to improve their knowledge regarding medical science, allocate adequate time to patients, and participate sufficiently in medical student education. Medical schools also have to support indirect costs of research and find funds to train residents.

A related issue is that less effort is devoted to obtaining medical histories¹ and performing physical examinations.² Therapeutic tests,³ a litany of laboratory tests or radiological procedures are often used to establish a diagnosis before forming a diagnostic hypothesis. In a sense, a Faustian bargain has been created.

Medical students have become more separated from their mentors and rely on group learning and computerized programs. Thus, the art of medicine—understanding patients in a more Oslerian, holistic manner—is lessened.

This is not a revelation to AQA members. The question is how to reverse the current situation and re-establish a more logical medical education. In that respect, state and federal governments must be involved since they provide the funds that will be required to meet those future needs. It will help if AQA members educate government officials to support those necessities. Furthermore, administrators and faculty of medical schools will have to reorganize the medical curricula.

Since medicine is the most complex profession, a conference of leaders of United States major medical organizations and medical schools should be convened to propose how to improve medical education. A major upgrade of Flexner’s 1910 report may be required to bring the art and science of medicine back together.⁴

References

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Hemingway

Dr. Mangione’s and Dr. Mockler’s article, “In Search of Hemingway’s Great War” in the Autumn 2020 issue of *The Pharos* is fascinating. However, in light of the authors’ pointing out that Ernest Hemingway was rejected for military service and served instead for one month as a Red Cross ambulance driver and bicycle deliveryman, I’m puzzled by the two photographs of him in uniforms, which appear to be those only worn by the military.

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Thanks to Dr. Blum for his letter, and for noticing that Ernest Hemingway was wearing a United States Army uniform. Before sending men to Europe, the American Red Cross issued the newly recruited ambulance drivers both U.S. Army officer uniforms and the rank of Second Lieutenant.

Hemingway thought the uniform looked “like a million dollars,” but then decided to make it even fancier by adding stylish cordovan (or cordwain) leather boots and later a Sam Browne belt.

To make things even more elegant, once in Milan he commissioned another U.S. Red Cross uniform from the famed Spagnolini Brothers, the best tailors in town. It is believed that the uniform Hemingway was wearing in the picture we used for our article (Photo 1) may be the Spagnolini uniform, which was also the uniform he wore upon returning home to the U.S., as seen in photo 2, taken in Oak Park, Illinois, after the war. This picture also shows the Italian Silver



Photo 1: Ernest Hemingway in Milan, 1918. No known copyright



Photo 2: Ernest Hemingway during his time in Italy, 1918. No known copyright

Medal for Bravery which Hemingway wears on the left breast.

Depending on the occasion, like speaking engagements, Hemingway was also known to add an Italian cape to his uniform.

To make things even more complicated, Hemingway liked to “enrich” the truth and wrote years later:

It’s not unnatural that the best writers are liars: a major part of their trade is to lie or invent, and they will lie when they are drunk, or to themselves, or to strangers. They often lie unconsciously, and they

remember their lies with deep remorse. If they knew all other writers were liars too it would cheer them....

And so, Hemingway lied a lot about the war. One of the biggest lies he ever told was that he had bedded Mata Hari, and that she wasn’t particularly good. This, of course, despite the minor fact that the Dutch spy had been executed by the French eight months before Hemingway ever made it to Europe.

Hemingway also once boasted to his father that he had “held rank” in both the American Red Cross and the Italian Army, which of course, also wasn’t true. He once boasted that he had fought on the Piave River alongside the Italian “*arditi*” (special forces bordering on the suicidal), when in reality he was just delivering cigarettes, coffee, and chocolates to the frontline soldiers.

Shortly before he was wounded he boasted to a friend in the U.S. that he had left the Red Cross to “get a little action,” and that he held the rank of Second Lieutenant “in the Italian Army.” Sometimes he even claimed that he had “fought” in campaigns that occurred after he had been hospitalized.

Yet, it is true that both during and after the war Hemingway often wore an Italian army uniform to which he was not entitled. A picture of him on a bicycle

in front of the destroyed church at *Fossalta di Piave*, just before he was wounded, shows him wearing what is probably an Italian Army uniform, and carrying a rifle and grenades, which, as a Red Cross volunteer, he was forbidden from doing.

Hemingway’s relation with uniforms and the truth is a good and colorful one. Kudos to Dr. Blum for noticing it and giving us a chance to talk about it.

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