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# Cinema for educating global doctors: from emotions to reflection, approaching the complexity of the human being

A Workshop Presentation in Wonca Europe, Basel, 2009

## Complexity, Movies and Medical Education

Complexity comes mostly from patients, not from diseases. While the technical knowledge helps in solving disease-based problems, the patient affected by these diseases remains a real challenge for the practicing doctor. To care implies having an understanding of the human being. Arts and humanities, because they enhance the understanding of the human condition, are useful resources when incorporated into the educational process and help in building a humanistic perspective of doctoring [1].

As audiovisual resources are the protagonists in our current culture, opportunities for teaching with cinema are well suited to the learners' environment. This learning scenario stimulates learner reflection. In life, important attitudes, values and actions are taught using role modeling, a process that impacts the learner's emotions. Since feelings exist before concepts, the affective path is a critical shortcut to the rational process of learning. While technical knowledge and skills can be acquired through training with little reflection, reflection is required to refine attitudes and acquire or incorporate values.

Since 2000, SOBRAMFA, the Brazilian Society of Family Medicine, has developed this cinematic teaching methodology in which movie clips are used to promote reflection on attitudes and human values [2, 3]. Through this workshop presentation, SOBRAMFA faculty members shared this methodology and their experience in teaching through movies and how to use it to help students, residents and doctors to be more reflective and promote empathic attitudes, qualifying themselves for a better approach to the complexity of the human being.

## Describing the scenario

The session was set as a workshop and more than 100 people attended. As usual in the Wonca Meetings, people came from several European countries (Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, UK, Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain).

Although in other opportunities we have always asked the audience about their motivation for attending the session and if they have any experience in teaching with movies in their own setting, this was not

**Table 1**

Movie clips presented.

Movie title	Time counting	Comments
The Lion King	1:04:00–1:08:52	Simba, you have forgotten me. You forgot who you are so you have forgotten me. You are the true Lion King.
The Nanny Diary	0:05:54–0:06:55	Tell me: who are you? ... I have no idea!
About Schmidt	1:54:00–1:56:20	What difference have I made with my life? None at all.
The Notebook	1:38:00–1:39:12	What do you want? Not your parents, not me, not other people, but you: what do you want?
Pretty Woman	1:26:19–1:28:49	How can someone change in a two hour opera performance, even without understanding the Italian language and lacking knowledge about Opera?
October Sky	1:17:31–1:20:30	Coal mine is your life, not mine. I'll never get in it again. I want to go into space.
The Legend of 1900	0:28:57–0:31:00 0:50:00–0:52:40	Release the piano, otherwise I can't create this music. Come with me, take the risk. From where comes this music? Look at people and you will find out (this is patient-centered approach, people-centered music).
Searching for Bobby Fisher	0:35:00–0:37:00	I will make it easier for you (the teacher throws the chess pieces down).
Man of Honor	1:57:21–1:59:37	Mentoring is essential to bring the best from people. I want my twelve steps, report to this line.
Spartacus	0:49:30–0:50:50/part II	Who is Spartacus? I am Spartacus, I am Spartacus. Everyone is Spartacus. More than a person it is an idea.
Ladder 49	0:49:53–0:50:36	I have just come to tell a mother that her son is dead and you are fighting like this, in my house!! We honor the dead colleague when we turn back to work every single day.
Marvin's Room	0:57–0:59 1:26:53–1:28:02 1:33–1:34	I have such love in life! I was able to love them. This is why I am happy.
Saving Private Ryan	1:48:30–1:51:27 2:36:21–2:36:50 2:38:40–2:39:10 2:39:25–2:41:30	They are the only brothers I have now. James earn this. Every day I think about what you said to me. I tried to live my life the best I could, and I hope before your eyes I earned what you all did for me.

possible because of the short time and too many people in the room. However, we took some brief answers to the “*why are you here?*” question from some of the attendants before the presentation started. There were people “intrigued” and “looking for something new”, and even “wondering how to teach and learn while having fun”. Some came because they knew our teaching methodology and wanted to learn more; some because they just love movies. There were people who came because they already use movies in their teaching setting and wanted to compare their approach with our experience; some were using movies intuitively and wanted to know if this more systematic academic method might enhance their own work.

The session started with an introduction on the theoretical background and a brief description of our previous experiences and publications on the field. Then came the 20–30-minute period in which multiple movie clips were shown in rapid sequence, along with some facilitator’s comments while the clips were going on. This sequence is described in table 1, in which the movies used, the time counting and possible comments can be found.

The proper methodology in cinematic teaching includes the open discussion after showing the movie clips in which the attendants ask questions and share their reflections, feelings, and thoughts. When the audience is large and session scheduling (2–3 hours) allows it, the facilitator breaks the audience into small groups to encourage discussion. At the end of the session, the large group meets together and spokespersons from the small groups share the topics discussed in their groups. Again, in this opportunity the time was too short so this couldn’t be done. After grasping some comments and a few challenge questions such as “what do you do with all this?” we moved ahead to explain the methodology and the learning process.

### Understanding the Methodology and the Learning Process

Movies provide a quick and direct teaching scenario in which specific scenes point out important issues, emotions are presented in accessible ways where they are easy to identify, and learners are able to understand and recognise them immediately. To foster reflection is the main goal in this cinematic teaching set. The purpose is not to show students how to incorporate a particular attitude, but rather to promote students’ reflection and to provide a forum for discussion.

In this context, it makes sense to use movie clips because of their brevity, rapidity and emotional intensity. Bringing clips from different movies, to illustrate or intensify a particular point, fits well with the dynamic and emotional nature of the students’ experience. The Faculty who made the clips show them with simultaneous commentary and this peculiar method seems to expand perceptions and fosters student reflection. In our experience from teaching Brazilian people, this method fits nicely with their intuitive learning temperament. Usually we use American movies and they are spoken in English with subtitles in Portuguese. The learners are able to follow the subtitles and the facilitator’s comment at the same time, because in this case the comments don’t compete with the original language (mostly English).

The method is well-suited to the audio-visual culture in which our students are immersed, impacts learners’ affective domain and motivates and involves them. It works because emotions lead students to reflect about their lives, they identify with film characters and movie “realities”, and use the film scenes to represent their own reality. The educational outcome is expanded by providing continuity through daily life, in which students’ reflection is supported by the film situations’ models. Sometimes the students become in-

involved and express their ideas through new film scenes chosen by them because they felt they would be useful for starting a new discussion.

In our teaching experience, the subjects which emerged in the discussions are all related to the development of the human being. Thus, the importance of dialogue and respect for others’ opinions and perspectives, caring about little things in life (which makes a difference when dealing with people), promoting compassion, empathy, and commitment [4].

### The audience giving Feedback

*Fostering reflection* is the main concept noted in all the evaluations and comments coming from the audience. The whole process – quick movie clips along with the facilitator’s comments – is responsible for this outcome. While the sudden changing scenes in the clips effectively evoke individual concerns and reflection on the clips in individual members of the audience, the comments act as a valuable amplifier to the whole process. As the audience is involved in their own personal reflective process, each one may agree or disagree with the presenter’s comments and draw their own conclusions. This is a desirable outcome, once participants note that divergent comments are particularly useful to facilitate the reflecting process.

There was little time to promote a great group discussion, so we needed to hear some comments from a few attendants. Certainly, there was much more trapped in their hearts which would be nice to hear. To illustrate this feedback see some comments, below, picked randomly from the audience by our SOBRAMFA team:

- I have seen this presentation before, but it’s always a surprise. At the beginning, you can’t connect what all this has to do with family medicine or complexity. But as movies go on you get involved and suddenly you are reflecting on your life.
- The movies, the music, the comments all together is a pleasant experience and goes deep into your life, and you realise you are not alone in all this complexity and in your own challenges. People accept their own emotions, there is a whole disclosure among the audience, and emotional barriers are overcome. It doesn’t matter if this is academic or not; it works for lifting up people.
- The cinematic experience pushes us to reflect and to not forget what really matters in our life as doctors. We live in a technological world and when we try to know everything about the specific, we might really forget the wholeness, about reality. This works as a tremendous recall for keeping the focus.
- This was a terrific experience for me. The movie in which the young man decided to live his life despite what his parents wanted was inspiring. Yes, we need to make the difference with our lives and so we need to remember who we are and what we really want.

There was also an important concern in this scenario full of diversity. Would this approach work with a multicultural audience? Although the cultural backgrounds might be different, emotions proved to be a universal language. After ending the session, people came to us and wanted to know more details. We thought this wouldn’t happen with people from non-Latin culture who we expected to be less emotionally open. The audience found out easily that the methodology was not just to feel emotions but to understand how emotions are intimately involved in their daily lives, both personally and professionally. It is about reflecting on emotions, and figuring out how to translate what they learn into attitudes and action. Reflection is the correct bridge to move from emotions to behavior.

**Take-home message**

When we got the appointment for the workshop presentation, we expected an interactive discussion with the audience, high feedback from the participants, and a pleasant scenario to construct new paths through emotions, to approach the complexity in which every single patient, and every single doctor, of course, is involved. Even though the presentation, because of the short time, was much more about demonstrating the methodology instead of following all the usual steps, the outcomes were consistent and reinforce our previous experiences. Teaching with movies, indeed, increases reflection, promotes empathic attitudes, enriches professional values, and helps in developing well-rounded qualities [5]. We can conclude that the cinema teaching scenario provides Family Medicine educators with an innovative resource to broaden the range of human experience for better understanding the human being.

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Maria de Lourdes Murano and André Aguiar for their useful help in preparing the movie clip sequence and its detailed description.

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