

Healing with the Pen: Literature and the Quest to Humanise Medical Practice in Nigeria

Abstract

In this inaugural lecture, written from a first person narrative approach and a very personal perspective, I examine the gradual evolution of the field of Literature and Medicine in Nigeria. Thus, this paper, which is divided into 17 sections, beginning from the Salutations and Courtesies to the Addenda, presents my foray into the field of Literature and Medicine. I show how I developed the outline for a postgraduate course, ENG 743: Literature and Medicine, in the Department of English of the University of Ibadan and how the course possesses the potential of serving as a tool for the humanisation of medical practice in Africa's most populated country. In this lecture, I also discuss how several Nigerian medical doctors have used literature to highlight Nigeria's multifarious socio-political and economic problems. Therefore, I posit that one of the effective methods of teaching the ethics of medicine or Bioethics in Nigerian medical schools is through the use of the three genres of literature, namely, prose, poetry and drama, which are veritable and verifiable tools of information dissemination. The paper also talks about an on-going plan that could culminate in the formal establishment of an Institute of Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the University of Ibadan. In the Addenda, I present a number of short stories, articles and poems, which depict the nature of Literature and Medicine and which also foreground my pioneering role in the evolution of Literature and Medicine in Nigeria.

Key Words: Physician-Writers, Literature and Medicine, Medical Humanities, University of Ibadan, Nigeria