Part 1: Importance of Humanities in Medicine

What are the Medical Humanities?
- Interdisciplinary field drawing from philosophy, literature, history, art, and ethics to explore illness, healing, caregiving
- Dr. Rita Charon: "Medicine practiced with narrative competence - the ability to recognize,
absorb, interpret, and be moved by the story of illness."
- Purpose: See the person, not just the disease.

Why This Matters
- Empathy declines during med school - especially clinical years (documented in research).
- Burnout, moral distress, depersonalization rising.
- Training encourages emotional distance for survival, but unchecked → loss of purpose and connection.
- Humanities create space for reflection, purpose, and patient-centered care.

Narrative Medicine & Patient Stories
- Listening beyond symptoms → fears, values, social context, worldview.
- Open-ended questions allow the full story to emerge.
- Clinical skills insight: sometimes the patient's story gives more than any test.
- Dr. Arnold Palmer: "Of all the tools in my medical bag, the most important is my ears."
- Rushing or relying only on checklists risks missing what truly matters.

Race, Identity & Intersectionality
- Humanities help unpack social & structural context of health.
- Example: Race is a social construct - past "race-based" medical adjustments (e.g., eGFR) caused harm.
- Intersectionality: overlapping discrimination (e.g., racism + sexism) impacts care.
- Without this lens, we risk perpetuating bias

Medicine is Not Neutral
- Medicine operates within systems of power, inequality, and history.
- Humanities train us to recognize injustice, advocate for equity, and integrate cultural competence into care.
- Treating the whole person means understanding their story, beliefs, struggles, and identity