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In India, Health Humanities is often a part of Humanities departments, where discourse frequently slips into romance rather than rigour. One strand glorifies pre-modern practices by claiming ancestors lived flawlessly and modernity ruined everything, ignoring life expectancy data. Another upholds pseudoscientific traditions as resistance to colonialism. Both overlook the epistemological foundations of evidence-based healthcare.

The rightful place for Health Humanities lies in medical colleges where Humanities scholars and practitioners work together, guided by science, committed to equity and ethical practice, and attentive to what Paulo Freire described as “critical consciousness” leading to a nuanced understanding of lived realities and possible solutions.

At a crossroads

In India, Health Humanities is at the crossroads where inequity, cultural taboos, and poor communication continue to impact healthcare amid rapid advancements in healthcare practices. Fear of medical procedures, lack of transparency, and heavy costs push many patients towards pseudoscientific and faith healing practices. Integrating Health Humanities in medical education is vital to restore human dignity through ethics and equity.

Prof. Sathyaraj Venkate-



Repair those rifts

Why integrating Health Humanities into the medical curriculum is vital

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

san of NIT Tiruchi notes a contrast in the function of Health Humanities in English and Cultural Studies departments and medical colleges. While Humanities departments study illness as a cultural narrative, medical schools emphasise observation, clinical empathy, and communication as Humanities components in healthcare education. The way forward is to combine these strands so that cultural analysis informs scientific care, and exposure to clinical realities refines cultural discourses on healthcare.

India's medical curriculum can draw on global models: Columbia University's narrative medicine trains in listening beyond symptoms; Stanford pairs literature and bioethics to examine autonomy and justice; King's College London blends philoso-

phy and history to debate resource allocation and end-of-life care. These efforts show how science directs care and humanistic training restores social and ethical context.

Marginalised groups bear heavier disease burdens yet receive less care. At a recent conference, Dr. Srijithesh P.R. from NIMHANS, Bengaluru, suggested reading healthcare in India using Thomas Piketty's equity lens showing how inherited inequality sustains deprivation and how treatment costs push families into poverty. At the other end, affluent Indians flying abroad for treatment signals eroding trust in the domestic 'healthcare industry'. Taboos around reproductive health and mental illness still impede access to quality healthcare.

Recently, the Medical Council introduced electives in Health Humanities. The National Medical Commission included Attitude, Ethics, and Communication (AETCOM) in the curriculum. While some students agree that these courses renewed their sense of purpose, many colleges treat them as a checkbox. Integrating humanist socio-cultural and economic inquiry into the medical curriculum remains a distant dream.

A stumbling block in achieving this vision is the incompatibility among disciplines. Some Humanities scholars view tech-driven healthcare advancements as dehumanising, and some doctors dismiss humanistic inquiry as unscientific and absurd. Such resistance places the Humanities and Medical Sciences as warring

factions and impedes meaningful collaborations.

The issue is human choices, not technology. AI, telehealth, and genomics can exclude or empower. Dr. Mario Vaz of St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, argues that including History, Bioethics, and Social Medicine can bridge contrasting disciplines. In *Humanities in Medical Education*, Rajiv Mahajan and Tejinder Singh call for deeper engagement with equity, culture, and scientific temper.

A new framework

Considering the Indian context and diverse viewpoints, we propose a five-module framework: a critical history of healthcare disparities to explore how caste, gender, class, and wealth shape healthcare solutions; illness narratives across cultures to

engage with the differences in lived experiences of conditions like Alzheimer's and depression among elite patients and the underprivileged; communicating science in diverse contexts to prepare doctors to counter mis(dis)information and work across languages; an anthropology of healthcare technology that situates healthcare advancements in their social settings; and an ethics of healthcare technologies that weighs the consequences of tools such as AI and gene editing.

These modules must be rigorous and experiential and reinforced through fieldwork, outcome reviews, and work with advocacy groups, with patient voices at the centre. When implemented effectively, it equips doctors to confront science and stigma and to join global conversations linking medicine, anthropology, ethics, technology and democratised access to healthcare.

Health Humanities must move beyond English departments and become an integral part of medical colleges, where Humanities scholars can work in tandem with medical practitioners. This integration can help India produce clinicians who heal disease and discrimination and repair rifts between science and society, technology and humanity.

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OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I finished B.Tech in Chemical Engineering (8.5 CGPA) and have three years experience across EPC, oil and gas valve manufacturing and the automobile sector. I don't know what my niche is or how to grow into higher positions. I like to communicate and travel. Is there any course that is not too expensive that I can do? Saravana Kumar

Dear Saravana,
Have you considered moving into a Sales/Business Development role? It needs communication skills and, depending on the industry, you could be literally living out of a suitcase.

With your credentials and experience, you could explore project management, field engineering or supply chain (technical procurement) management.

To identify your niche, self-assess and think about your past roles, What did you enjoy the most? Speak to your previous bosses and current manager and identify your strengths. Network with people on LinkedIn and send a connection request to people who inspire you and ask for a 15-minute chat to learn about their career path.

Depending on what you shortlist as a career shift plan, you can choose to work on specific certifications that are cost-effective and will provide you with credentials that will help you pivot.

An Executive MBA is a one-stop shop for most of the roles. Choose the specialisation according to your niche.

Develop software skills like Advanced Excel + SQL + Data Visualisation (Power

Gain experience

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

BI/Tableau). These are invaluable in every industry.

I have completed the B1 level in German. To be a teacher of “German as a foreign language”, what are the courses I should pursue? Simran

Dear Simran,
B1 level is a solid foundation. However, to become a professional German teacher, you need to advance your language skills significantly and acquire formal teaching qualifications. Most employers and certification bodies require minimum C1 (Advanced) proficiency and C2 (Mastery). Pass the Goethe-Zertifikat C1 and then aim for C2 (Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom). From the Goethe-Institut, consider the DUF (Deutsch Unterrichten Fürs) specifically designed for German teachers and ZDaF (Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache), which is a certification to teach German.

Also, pursue formal teacher training courses to learn teaching methodologies. A Master's degree is necessary to teach at the university level. So, consider a Master of Arts in German as a Foreign Language or Applied Linguistics. You will need a C1 certificate (like TestDaF or DSH) to get admission.

In India, many central universities (like JNU, Delhi University, University of Hyderabad, EFLU Hyderabad) offer Master's programmes in German that include pedagogy modules.

Start gaining experience once you sign up for your teacher training course. Taking tuitions for A1/A2 level students is the best

way to apply your learning. Or seek part-time roles as a teaching assistant in language institutes.

I am in Class 11 and passionate about two fields: computer science and space science. What should I do to pursue a career in space science? Is a career in this field realistic or should I focus on CS? Mina

Dear Mina,
Computer Science and Space are connected given that software is used to control a rover on Mars, and algorithms to process data from a telescope and so much more. The standard path in India for core research and development of space science and technology is through engineering. Consider a B.Tech or B.E. in Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE), Aerospace or Aeronautical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering.

Admissions for top colleges such as the IITs (Bombay, Kharagpur, Madras and Kanpur have strong Aerospace programmes) or IIST Thiruvananthapuram is through JEE Advanced rank.

You can also explore the Pure Science route, which leads towards research, theory, and data analysis. A B.Sc. in Physics, Astronomy, Astrophysics, followed by an M.Sc. and then a Ph.D.. in the IISc-Bengaluru or the IISERs, IITs will be via the CUET or institute-specific exams.

A career in Space Science is no longer restricted. Apart from ISRO and NASA, there are opportunities with ESA (Europe), JAXA (Japan) and Roscosmos (Russia) and

private space companies.

I completed a B.Sc. in 2024 with a 9.25 CGPA and was preparing for the defence exams. Despite two attempts, I have not been able to clear them. I have been at home all this time and am losing confidence. How can I stay focused? Harshata

Dear Harshata,
First, regain your confidence. Self-analysis should not become a loop of frustration and low motivation. Think beyond the defence forces and see what you would like to explore. Beyond the CDS, consider AFCAT, ICG, SSC-Tech and other exams that may match your B.Sc. background. There are many stages after the written exams such as the medical and SSB, which may also be a block. Have you tried joining a dedicated coaching programme? That would help. If the SSB is a hurdle, identify a senior ex-armed forces officer who can help prepare for the GTO tasks and interview practice. Practise speaking clearly and concisely. Get involved in group activities (sports, volunteering) to subconsciously build your group dynamics skills.

Explore Plan B. Your 9.25 CGPA is a golden ticket. Prepare for M.Sc. Entrance Exams. It will open doors to research, PhD, lectureship, and corporate jobs. Explore other government exams that are prestigious and offer secure careers.

If you still feel lost, meet a career counsellor who can help you navigate this and work with you on identifying other prospective careers.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge.



More than academic tinkering

If India is to be a Biotechnology leader, higher education must evolve to develop leaders who can address problems that cut across the laboratory, the marketplace, and society

R Shivakumar

The 21st century is undeniably the era of biology. The BIO-E3 policy – Biotechnology for Economy, Employment, and Environment – puts innovation at the centre of development. While the opportunities are vast, the country's capacity to lead in biotechnology rests on its capacity to educate, inspire, and prepare the next generation of innovators.

Beyond domain knowledge

Biotechnology today demands not just domain knowledge but also creativity, ethics, and transdisciplinary thinking, as tomorrow's science will evolve at the intersection of Biology and Artificial Intelligence (AI), Chemistry, Data Science, Sustainability and Engineering.

Indian universities are finally starting to mirror this reality. We now have B.Tech. and M.Sc. programmes that combine

Biotechnology with Computational Sciences, Environmental Engineering, and even Policy and Economics. These are not merely academic tinkering but strategic moves to develop leaders who can address problems that cut across the laboratory, the marketplace, and society.

India's biotech future cannot be constructed in silos in its metropolitan centres. Talent lies in all corners of our nation, from industrial parks to rural heartlands. With over 1,300 biotechnology schools in India, access to STEM education has now extended to students from smaller cities, many of whom bring with them new ideas based on their lived experiences.

The more perspectives and voices we bring into the innovation process, the stronger and globally applicable our biotech solutions will be. That is why we need to keep investing in labs, faculty, and digital infrastructure that can enable talent from everywh-

ere to compete and work together on a global platform.

Ethical dilemmas

Biotechnology holds great promise but also has its ethical dilemmas. Gene editing, cloning, and customised medicine hold out unique possibilities but also have moral issues. If we are to lead the world, we need to lead responsibly. Hence, Bioethics needs to stand side-by-side with Biology. It is not enough if our graduates ask, “Can we do this?” They need to be able to ask “Should we do this?” The leaders we educate need to be as confident in their ethical decision-making as they are in scientific ability.

India's path to emerging as a world biotech leader by 2047 will not be shaped merely by capital deployment or technology uptake. It will be shaped by the individuals who propel it. Our role as educators is to cultivate visionaries, not merely workers; pathfinders, not merely practi-

tioners. To do this, we require greater industry-academic collaboration, more profound global research linkages, and an education system that prizes inquiry as well as compliance. We must prepare our young people with the technical tools to invent and the resilience to ride through a world changing at lightning speed.

The biotechnology industry is a strong lever for India's economic development, international position, and social advancement. But the lever is as good as the hands that use it. Education is the force that will equip India with the talent, values, and vision to drive the world into the biotech century. As we stand at this inflection point, the call is clear: we need to build education ecosystems bold in ambition, rich in opportunity, and unrelenting in integrity of innovation.

The writer is Chairman of SRM Group of Institutions, Chennai - Ramapuram and Tiruchi.

Personalise CVs: Unlike in some countries

A top-down view of a person sitting cross-legged on a white floor, using a laptop. The laptop screen displays the text "JOB SEARCH" at the top, followed by a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a row of seven human icons, with a magnifying glass icon positioned over the fourth one. The person is wearing blue jeans and a yellow long-sleeved shirt. The background is a plain white surface.

“Hidden job market”: Not all job opportunities are advertised in obvious places. In fact, a large num-

Navigating interviews: Interview formats in the U.K. are rapidly evolving in the AI era. From traditional panel interviews to AI-recorded video responses

Real-world experience: Every bit of experience counts. Whether it's a student consultancy project, a short internship, freelance work, or community volunteering, real-world exposure

Employability isn't just about ticking boxes. It is about being curious, intentional, and proactive. The earlier you begin building your professional profile, the better equipped you will be to seize opportunities when they arise. Your time in the U.K. is more than the degree. It's your chance to build a global career-ready identity that reflects who you are and where you are headed; a journey that starts long before you submit your first job application. So, whether you're heading to London, Manchester, or Glasgow, arrive with more than just your luggage. Bring your curiosity, ambition, and a plan to build your employability from the moment you land.

The writer is the Deputy Head of Careers Service at the University of Leeds, the U.K.

In essence, securing the future of academia extends beyond deploying advanced technologies; it depends on cultivating a well-informed, proactive, and security-conscious campus community.

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