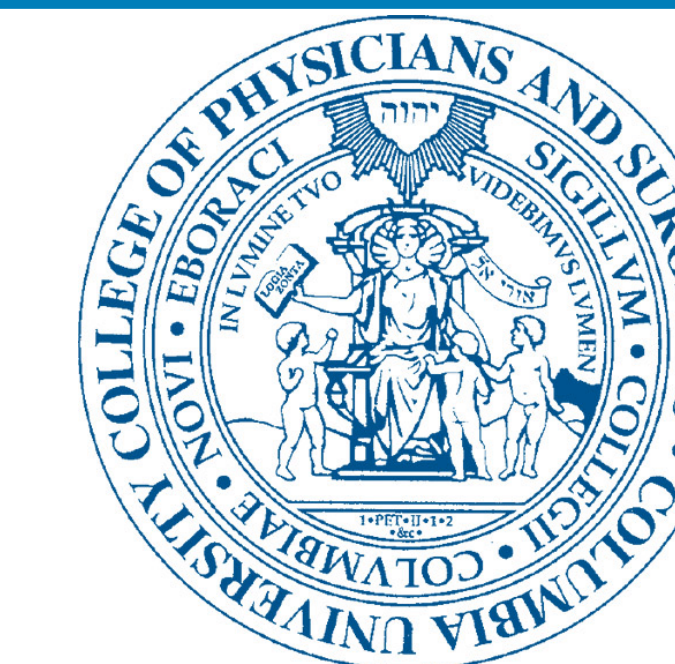


Humanism in Anatomy Cadaver Dissection Using Student and Faculty Reflections

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Background

Anatomy dissection acts as a transformative and symbolic moment in a medical student's education. While the Hippocratic Oath shows ideals for treating patients, the cadaver presents a salient figure of the human body that students will work with for the rest of their career.

Advances in technology provide great opportunities for viewing structures; however, the dissection experience itself has students face their 'first patient' and embrace the reality of death.

Working with cadavers can be a positive empathy building experience for some while being emotionally distressing for others.

Students have diverse needs and experiences prior to anatomy, so discussions and reflections must start early to facilitate emotional preparation and expectations when working with donors.

Objectives

1. Create opportunities for student reflection on the dissection experience and validate potential vulnerability or emotions they may have felt.
2. Support students on how to treat the donors as a first patient through reflection of bedside manner and aspects of palliative care.
3. Provide incoming students with advice from senior classmates on what to expect from the dissection experience.

Materials and Methods

-Students were given an opportunity to participate in video interviews, or to submit written reflections, about their anatomy dissection experience.

-Participants included medical and dental students at Columbia VP&S from the class of 2022-2024, as well as two faculty members of the anatomy course.

-12 video interviews were recorded and edited, and 6 written reflection pieces were submitted.

-The reflections were compiled into an interactive learning module using Articulate Storyline. The module was shared with the class of 2025 during orientation prior to their first dissection.

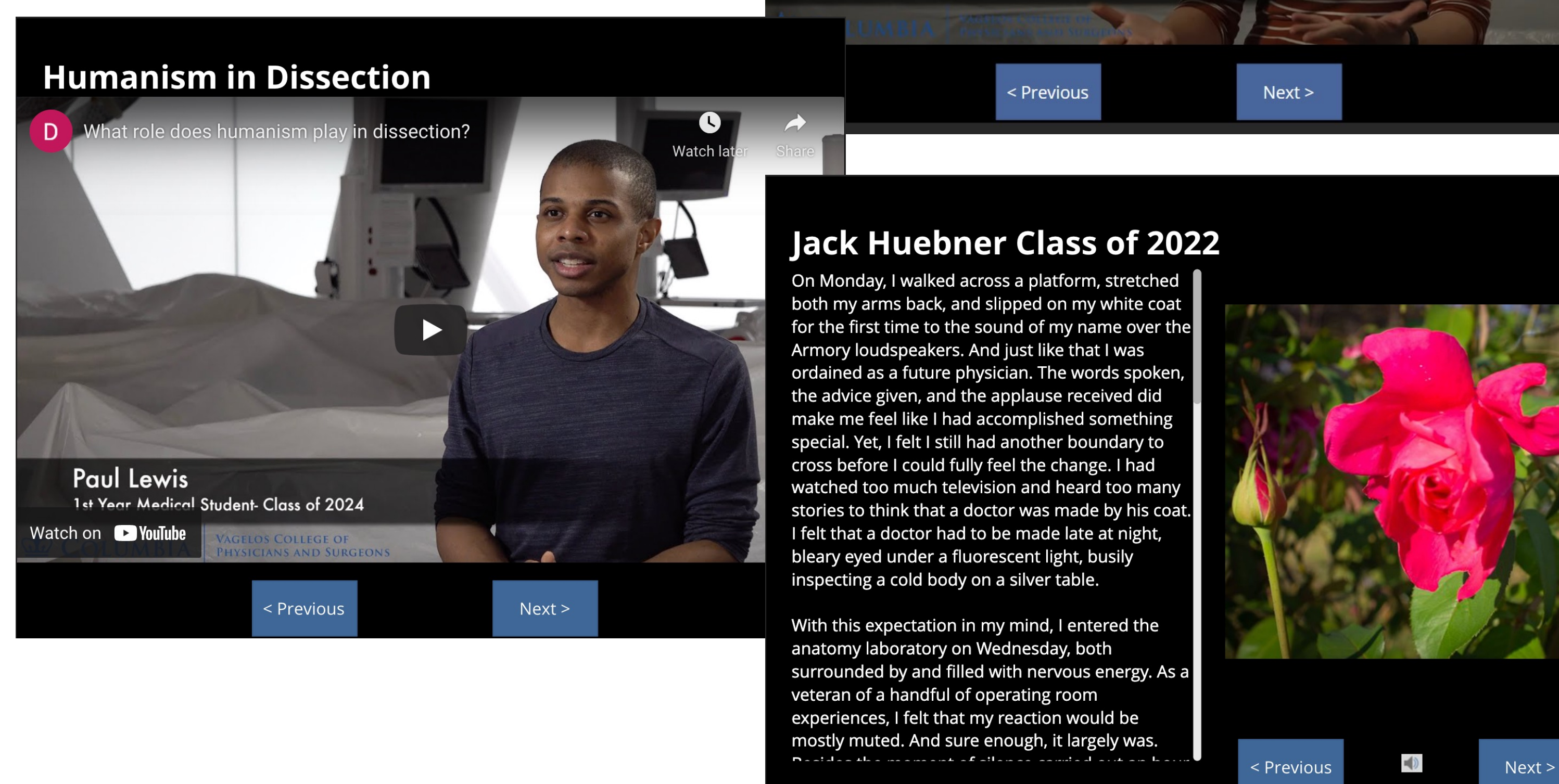
Module Visuals

The module contains a compilation of videos, quotes, and poems from student reflections on the dissection experience. The module was designed to introduce incoming students on what to expect from the course from both a learning and emotional perspective.

Content

Humanism in the Anatomy Lab
Seeing The First Patient
Experience with Cadaver Dissection
Advice for Future Classes
Memories from the Course
Donor and Family Appreciation
Scholarly works Reflecting on Mortality

Access the
module



"I will remember my donor as the person who taught me how to be comfortable working with and being around a dead body. Being able to interact with a dead body and being so intimately connected to the concept of death was really humbling."
~Daniel Chen

Literature Cited

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Results

First year medical and dental students at VP&S completed the module and reported that it provided the time and space to reflect on what the anatomy experience would be like before their first dissection.

During the first dissection students cited content from the modules and were open with one another about their feelings with the dissection.

Future Directions

-Perform a formal assessment of the modules impact with incoming students.

-Continue expanding on submitted reflection pieces in video and written formats with each class.

-Consider alternative formats for the reflections other than the Storyline module interface.

-Contact other institutions to inquire how they bring humanism into the dissection experience.

"The Humanism module is phenomenal, and [I] would be so honored to carry on the project's legacy. Having a structured space to reflect on the experience—first, before anatomy starts, by listening to last year's students' reflections, and then, after anatomy, to reflect on your own experience—is an experience I would be grateful to help shape and provide for my peers and future M1s."

~Student, class of 2025.

Conclusion

Student and faculty reflections about cadaver dissection experience through an interactive module enable students at Columbia VP&S to engage in the humanistic aspect of cadaver dissection and be better prepared for their first day of dissection.

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