Graphic medicine from library to classroom

MONIQUE CLAR, Medical librarian, Bibliothèque de la santé

ISABELLE BRAULT, Assistant Professor, Faculté des sciences infirmières
GRAPHIC NARRATIVES IN HEALTH SCIENCES EDUCATION

COMICS AT THE MEDICAL LIBRARY

INTEGRATION IN THE CURRICULUM
Graphic medicine can be defined as the use of comics (graphic narratives) in health sciences education and patient care.

http://www.graphicmedicine.org/
Graphic medicine in education

Graphic narratives about personal experiences of illness from patients and their families can be used to illustrate:

- distress
- empathy
  and collaboration between family members and health professionals
  and thus give students a broader experience of health and illness.
Graphic medicine in education

It could also help students improve their observational and interpretive skills.

"To read a comic effectively, you must understand not only what is overtly seen and said but also what is implied. This is because much of the action takes place outside the boundaries of comic panels in the blank space known as the gutter. Thus, readers of comics, like doctors in the exam room, must determine meaning by inferring what happens out of sight and without words."

Je me sens toute seule

avec

MDN

problème.
From 12 mois sans intérêt ©2007, Catherine Lepage & Mécanique générale, Montréal. Reprinted with permission.
My mother used to say that she wanted her ashes spread under the sugar maple tree beside the old farmhouse where we lived in Maine.

She also used to say that she wanted to be reincarnated as a maple tree. She felt a strong kinship with trees, especially maples.

Mom loved all of nature: plants, worms, rocks, soil.

She did not seem to feel as separate from it as most people did.
When Mom got sick, many years had passed since we drank tree juice.

One day there was a wasp on the front porch.

It was crawling along in front of Mom.

She reached her foot out and stepped on the wasp, then ground her foot back and forth, back and forth.

She didn't stop until the wasp was a black smear.

I caught myself wondering what Mom thought of herself.

I realized that part of me believed the real Mom lived somewhere else, unchanging, immortal, observing the new Mom.

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Graphic medicine is a recent form of narrative medicine which has been part of medical education for many years through the use of novels, films and television.
COMICS AT THE MEDICAL LIBRARY

Context:

- Embedded librarian in the committee for the renewal of the undergraduate medical education curriculum at UdeM.
- Very strong patient-partnership approach of the Medical Faculty.
- Implementing a new reading area in the library
- ...and a lifelong love for comic books.
The comics collection

- 40 comics ordered during the 2011 Fall semester
  - 27 graphic medicine narratives
  - 5 graphic narratives in science
  - 8 humorous or adventurous stories in a medical or scientific context
- 25 comics in French, 15 in English
Collection development tools

- Graphic medicine site http://www.graphicmedicine.org/
- BDMédicales site http://www.bdmmedicales.com/
- Articles on graphic medicine
- Public libraries and bookstores!
Graphic Medicine narratives – Overview of topics in our collection

- Aids (2)
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Autism
- Bipolar disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Cancer (11)
- Childhood diseases and disorders (7)
- Depression (2)
- Drug dependence
- Epilepsy (2)
- Leukemia
- Mourning (6)
- Palliative care
- Spina bifida
The Collection in the Library

- Books catalogued and ready to go in the library reading area by the 2012 Fall semester.
- Publicity campaign planned for the beginning of the semester:
  - Library website, posters, library welcome booth, emails to student associations in health sciences, etc.
  - Our communication librarian showed interest in promoting it throughout campus.
Financial crisis

- In September 2012, Québec universities entered a financial crisis and the libraries were deeply affected by the situation.

- It was decided that the timing for launching a publicity campaign on a comic books collection at the medical library was most untimely, considering we were not sure we could even buy new editions of the course reserve books.
INTEGRATION IN THE CURRICULUM

In light of the situation, the librarian decided that the only way to justify the investment, in a budget cut period, and keep this collection growing would be to define it as teaching material at Université de Montréal.
Step 1 Toward integration:

Collect usage data
Survey

- Length of time: **16 weeks**
- Number of questionnaires completed: **38**
- Questionnaires completed by health sciences students: **15**
- Questionnaires respondents very positive:
  - All in favor of a comics collection at the medical library
  - Great comments
Comments from respondents from health sciences departments

- I loved this comic book! Super! 😊
- I share the comics with my family.
- Very interesting! I enjoy having adult comics, especially in health.
- This is a good idea to promote Québec comic books.
- It is a good idea to promote Québec comic books.
- Yes!!! Please add more patients narratives and also novels related to medicine.
- Please add Alison Bechdel books to the collection.
- Very interesting for some courses. You have a great collection.
- Very interesting for some courses. You have a great collection.
- Very interesting!
- I enjoy having adult comics, especially in health.
- THANK YOU!
- This is a good addition to the medical library collection.

Thank you!
Circulation Statistics

October 1\textsuperscript{st} 2012 to March 31\textsuperscript{st} 2013

Graphic medicine narratives (27 titles)

49 loans

34 renewals
Step 2 Toward Integration: Reaching Faculty

Link to the graphic medicine collection added by a professor of physiotherapy to a class outline (PHT1301 Introduction à la physiothérapie):

"...students need to review a book, movie or art work that give them a different view of health professional-patient relationship, disability, or the role of a natural caregiver."
Step 2 Toward Integration: Reaching Faculty

Partnership between the librarian and the Nursing professor president of the committee for the revision of the e-learning modules for the interprofessional education (IPE) curriculum.

Each of the three health and social services interprofessional courses (CSS1900, CSS2900, CSS3900) reach more than 1000 students annually across UdeM faculties of Nursing, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, the Psychology and the Social Works departments and the School of Optometry.
IPE curriculum preparatory activity with Nursing students: use of a graphic narrative

- A graphic narrative about the illness of a child was used to help nursing students prepare for an IPE interfaculty workshop.

IPE curriculum : E-learning Modules

- Graphic medicine narratives will be integrated into the e-learning modules of the IPE curriculum.
- Excerpts have been selected to illustrate partnership with patients.
- Other excerpts might be selected as the revision of the e-learning modules goes on.
IPE Curriculum : E-learning Modules

Excerpts selected to illustrate the module on partnership with patients


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Step 2 Toward Integration: Reaching Faculty

- Other health sciences courses teaching empathy and partnership with patients have been identified.

- Professors have been contacted through emails to raise awareness of the collection’s potential as teaching material.
Conclusion

- Comics have been integrated in courses.
- More work has to be done to make professors and students aware of this collection and its potential as learning material.
- The library will continue adding titles to this collection.