

Tulane students launch podcast to inspire open-heartedness in medicine

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“Think of a physician who made you feel at ease. Now ask yourself: what qualities did this person embody? Presence, deep-listening, compassion?” : These three questions form the introduction to a new podcast produced by Tulane University School of Medicine students. The podcast also explains that these are the qualities of an open heart, the subject of a new podcast produced at the School of Medicine and hosted by Rebekah Byrne, MD, MPH, an adjunct professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

The “Open-Hearted MD” podcast features a lineup of rotating students and guest mentors, where the conversations will explore topics including mindfulness, gratitude and how to bring improvisation and humor into the medical practice. Also covered will be the difficult part of being a physician with topics such as death and dying and burnout.

“We bring the curious student perspective - the beginner’s mind - to the wisdom of the experienced mentor in hopes that everyone, from the pre-med student to the seasoned physician alike will find benefit,” Byrne says. “We aim to ask the hard questions, get vulnerable and ground ourselves in skills that allow us to better care for our patients and ourselves.”

The idea for the podcast took shape after Byrne and a group of medical students went to India to work with Tibetan refugees. The students met with the Dalai Lama, who told them smiling and kindness are important qualities of being a good doctor.

The podcast team wants to do more than simply air their recorded conversations. [A website that accompanies the podcast](#) includes key takeaways from each episode, suggestions for further reading, and reflection questions. The end goal is to develop an educational tool that complements medical school curriculum.

“We hope that listeners find these conversations as inspiring as we do,” said Byrne. “We want to engage people around ideas of building community and sharing in the practice of being an open-hearted MD.”

The podcast features original music written and performed by 4th year medical student Timothy Knowlton, and you can subscribe to “The Open-Hearted MD” on all major podcast platforms.