

Life imitates art in health-care recruitment workshop

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Renowned Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's artwork is explored from a medical humanities perspective in a workshop entitled "Frida Kahlo – The Forgotten Medical Student."

Dr. Fernando Antelo, a surgical pathologist at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, created the workshop out of a desire to talk about science and health in a manner that would interest students from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic strata.

Dr. Antelo's abstract entitled "An Opportunity for Recruitment into the Health Sciences Using Art - A Medical Humanities Perspective of Frida Kahlo" was presented Sunday at the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) annual meeting in San Diego. The ASBMB annual meeting is part of the Experimental Biology 2012 conference.

Dr. Antelo has been promoting the connection between art and science for the past five years. He actively uses the paintings of Kahlo to stimulate interest in science and [health care](#) professions. With the national population projected to increase to 392 million by 2050, the United States will need a work force trained to support a growing health care industry. Efforts to address this need often utilize open house events, informational packets, and live speakers, while artwork may be the new tool used in recruiting for the sciences.

"I have worked with several medical students and physicians in

recruiting events, and we always talk about how to generate more interest among students and motivate them to contact us," said Dr. Antelo. "By drawing a connection between medicine and a familiar topic such as art - or between medicine and a familiar personality such as Frida Kahlo - we hope to inspire more interest and a desire to apply to graduate and professional programs."

In the workshop, Dr. Antelo discusses the [artwork](#) and life of Kahlo, including her childhood interest in science. In high school, Kahlo chose a course of premedical studies. A near fatal accident, unfortunately, dissuaded her from pursuing a career in medicine but a new career interest in art would emerge. Drawing from the emotions sensed during her traumatic accident and the consequent medical complications, Kahlo painted experiences that people could recognize and relate to – such as feeling pain, being hospitalized, and fearing isolation. She also incorporated images of gross anatomy and classical genetics in her paintings, a unique quality that characterized Kahlo's work as different from that of her contemporaries.

According to Dr. Antelo, the use of medical imagery by Kahlo provides evidence about her continued passion for science. "We see an incredible effort by Kahlo to accurately portray science in her works," explains Dr. Antelo. "This means that Kahlo was actively and meticulously studying medical books." Dr. Antelo uses this observation to encourage students to not only take greater interest in their studies but to also think about careers in [science](#) and health care.

Provided by American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

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