

# Medals4Mettle: A Humanistic Way for Medical Students and Pediatric Patients to Bond

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## Background:

Humanism is a necessary component of patient care and is underutilized by many practicing physicians. Manifesting through altruism, integrity, respect for others and compassion, humanism becomes a key factor in caring for patients. It combines scientific knowledge and skills with these characteristics, bringing to the forefront the patient's values, concerns and autonomy (1,2).

One effort where the University of Louisville School of Medicine (ULSOM) encourages such practices is through collaboration with **Medals4Mettle (M4M)**, an international non-profit organization that gives marathon medals to patients battling debilitating illnesses.

The chapter at ULSOM matches students participating in the Kentucky Derby Half Marathon/Marathon with pediatric patients from the University of Louisville Pediatric Cancer and Blood Disorders Clinic. This allows an opportunity for the students to establish a relationship with their "running buddies" months prior to running the race. A ceremony is held on race day to acknowledge the patients and their families, and the students gift their medals to those running a much more difficult race of their own.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the program at ULSOM in order to create a replicable model for other schools to employ as a tool for implementing humanism in a unique way.

## Methods:

We conducted a survey for current and previous participants, which included medical student runners and patients/parents. The survey consisted of six 5-point Likert response format questions anchored with "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" and three open ended questions.



## Methods (cont'd):

The content of the scaled and open questions can be seen in Figures 1 and Table 1, respectively. For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used to compare students and parents on the Likert scale items. Means and standard deviations were depicted in graphic form. SPSS Version 22.0 was used for the analysis. Qualitative analysis was completed using Pandit's variation of Glaser and Straus' constant comparison (4). Constant comparison is useful with broad topic qualitative data sets; Pandit's simplified variation is useful for more focused comments such as in a specific program or event evaluation. Three reviewers coded open-ended data independently, then came to consensus on the final codes assigned. The frequency of each code by comment and by respondent group (students or parent) was calculated using Excel.

## Results:

Sixty-two medical students out of 126 (49%) and 21 pediatric patients/parents out of 63 (33%) responded to their respective surveys. Five of the six scaled questions had mean scores above 4.0, revealing that the majority of participants would recommend the M4M program to others, that it was a good use of their time and that it helped students relate to their patient on a personal level/patient relate to their healthcare team. The qualitative analysis identified three themes between both student and patient participant: M4M is a wonderful program, it provides a child/patient benefit and it allows you to connect with others.

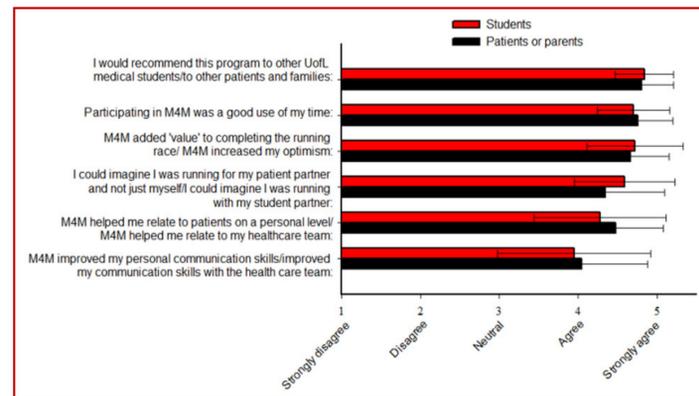


Figure 1

Code	Q1. Why did you participate in the M4M program?		Q2. How did the program meet your expectations?		Q3. What would you tell other medical students about the program?	
	Student	Patient/Parent	Student	Patient/Parent	Student	Patient/Parent
Personal benefit (e.g. get back into running, healthy)	38%	0%	1%	0%	7%	0%
Opportunity to give back (service)	13%	4%	0%	0%	9%	0%
Motivating and inspiring	11%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Child/ patient benefit</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Connect with others</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Wanted to participate again	4%	9%	9%	29%	2%	20%
Adds value to running	5%	0%	0%	0%	2%	23%
Invited to participate	0%	23%	14%	0%	0%	0%
Awareness of childhood cancer	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	7%
Support UL oncology dept.	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Met or exceeded my expectations	0%	0%	30%	9%	0%	0%
Made suggestion for improvement	0%	0%	12%	0%	2%	0%
<b>Wonderful program</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Just do it!	0%	0%	0%	0%	38%	10%

Table 1

Figure 1. Comparison of scaled responses from students and patients or parents. Error bars represent standard deviations. Table 1. Open ended responses characterized by code and question with percentage of all replies per open-ended question by group. Bold indicates predominant code across question and groups.

## Discussion:

The results of this study suggest that M4M is a successful program. The evaluation of the scaled responses validates the comprehensive agreement on the positive impact that a program such as M4M can offer to those participating. In terms of the qualitative analysis, several comments encompassing the three themes that were consistent among both student and patient participant included:

*-It's a wonderful use of your time in medical school and offers a chance to connect to a patient and to better explore the humanistic aspect of the medical field.*

*-I had no idea how fulfilling it would be to get to know the kids and also the real sense of solidarity that seems to be absent in my clinical rotations.*

*-Sarah loved meeting her runner and spending time with her. I feel like we really connected. It meant so much to us that a young student took time from their busy schedule to run this race and donate their medal to Sarah.*

*-It is amazing to see what it means to your child and your student as they get to know each other. The inspiration and the bond created is incredible.*

The responses reveal many of the benefits afforded to students that participated in M4M. They appreciate the experience of forging a special relationship with a patient outside of the hospital or clinic. By taking part in this worthwhile program, the family and the medical student connected on a level not often experienced by students in their typical medical school curriculum. Through participation in M4M, such a paradigm of interaction can be integrated into the clinical setting, so that students will develop a heightened sense of caring and compassion that will manifest in their subsequent patient encounters. In the future we plan to pair the medical students with the patients early on to create a longer-lasting, more meaningful relationship prior to the race

Other institutions can use our program description and positive results to help justify the time and effort needed for them to implement such a program.

## References:

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