The course System Based Healthcare is a longitudinal component of the 3rd year of medical school at the David Geffen School of Medicine. Once or twice a month, for a total of 16 sessions throughout the year, students leave their regular clerkships and spend the morning in small groups, interactive lectures, or experiential labs.

The first eight sessions of Systems Based Healthcare are taught in a mix of interactive lectures and experiential labs, from 8 am to noon on a Tuesday or Thursday. This half of the course focuses on basic issues of systems of healthcare, including Safety, Quality Improvement, Healthcare Disparities, Healthcare financing, and self-care.

The second half of the course is inter-professional, including students from the Schools of Nursing and Dentistry. The tutors consist of faculty from the Schools of Medicine, Nursing and Dentistry, and include social workers and psychologists. Inter-professional Competencies of Teamwork, Roles/Responsibilities, Values/Ethics, and Communication/Collaboration are included in the readings and activities of the course. Students meet in small groups of 7 to 9 students and two faculty members once or twice a month, from 9 am to noon on a Tuesday or Thursday, in Geffen Hall.

During the interprofessional half of Systems Based Healthcare students focus on the context of healthcare decision-making, including the team, hospital, culture, politics, economics, law and personal bias. Examples of topics include the legal, political and moral aspects of prescribing opioids for acute or chronic pain; the economic, legal, ethical and cultural considerations involved in end of life decision-making; and the public, professional and personal interpretation of what constitutes conflict of interest. Each student reads an article exploring the topic and writes a reflective essay linking the topic to clinical experiences in preparation for the discussion. Topics are "ripped from the headlines", and lively debates are encouraged.

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