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. In System Based Healthcare students focus on the context of medical decision-making, including the team, hospital, culture, politics, economics, law and personal bias. Examples of topics include the legal, political and moral aspects of sexual assault and abortion; the economics and cultural considerations involved in end of life decision-making; and the public and personal interpretation of what constitutes conflict of interest. Each student reads an article and writes a reflective essay in preparation for the discussion. Topics are “ripped from the headlines”, and lively debates are encouraged!

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.

The first four sessions of systems based healthcare will be taught in a mix of interactive lectures and experiential labs, from 8 am to noon on a Tuesday or Thursday. The rest of the year students will 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 the Learning Resource Center.

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