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Studying the Role of Medicine in Nazism and the Holocaust to Shape Professional Identity Formation

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To the Editor: A health professions education (HPE) roadmap is urgently needed to help students navigate increasingly complex ethical dilemmas,¹ including the rise of economic, social, and geopolitical issues. A framework can help ensure humanistic health care, truly inclusive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, and ethical vigilance in the use of burgeoning digital tools, including artificial intelligence applications.² The *Lancet* Commission on Medicine, Nazism, and the Holocaust report³ provides one such roadmap with its construct of history-informed professional identity formation, including moral formation, for navigating ethical dilemmas, preventing abuse of power, and preserving human dignity in health care for all.

A key goal of this HPE roadmap would be to facilitate reflection on this distinctive history, fostering health professionals who engage in morally courageous and responsible health care, research, public policy, and global citizenship, speaking up when necessary to eliminate antisemitism, racism, and all forms of discrimination from hospitals and institutions. The report³ has striking contemporary relevance within the painful, acute rise of antisemitism worldwide (especially since the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre in Israel⁴), including concerns about antisemitism displays by trainees and health professionals and their ability to provide humanistic patient care.^{5,6}

Given these concerns, we call for the HPE curriculum to highlight and cultivate reflection on pervasive physician complicity during the Holocaust and how ethics can be mutated. Physicians in Nazi Germany played a principal role in the persecution and dismissal of Jewish physicians, planning and executing crimes, such as forced sterilization, extermination of people with mental and physical disabilities, brutal experimentation on prisoners, deliberate state-sanctioned genocide of European Jewry, and the mass murder of other groups, including Sinti, Roma, and homosexual people.³ In contrast, the moral courage and resistance demonstrated by imprisoned Jewish health professionals in ghettos and concentration camps—as well as righteous gentiles—can inspire learners contemplating their own roles as emerging health professionals in society.

We highlight this history in an effort to prevent corrupt moral agency and abuse of power within HPE and practice. This history informs all aspects of modern bioethics. Learning about it may compel health professionals to practice and pursue scientific knowledge within a framework prioritizing individuals' human rights, with a particular responsibility to fight antisemitism, racism, and hate of all kinds.^{3,4} We therefore urge health professions educators to implement action steps derived from the *Lancet* Commission on medicine, Nazism, and the Holocaust report,³ such as (1) including curricular space to scrutinize how Nazi Germany-era medicine became corrupted by ideology and utilitarian “ethics,” (2) ensuring DEI programs include antisemitism awareness training, and (3) incorporating best practices to prevent religious discrimination

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