

Free essay about medical profession critique in the yellow wallpaper and wit

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Out of all the professions that individuals pursue, the medical profession is one of the most mind intensive. Professionals in this field usually have to undergo intensive session of training for a long time. This is because human health is a very sensitive issue that requires those charged with the responsibility of maintaining it to be competent and efficient. Because of the sensitivity of human health, the professional in this field are viewed as very powerful. In some situations, the health and wellbeing of a person is placed in the hands of a medical professional, and if the medical professional does not do his duties efficiently, death may result. Therefore, in one way or another, since disease and illnesses are inevitable, the survival of the human race is somehow dependent on the medical profession. Unfortunately, this much power that has been placed in the hands of medical professionals can sometimes become the source of discrepancies. Medical professionals may use their power to render oppression towards patients and indeed the entire society. This obviously leads to much criticism of the medical profession. Evidence of medical profession critique is evident in literature works written over time. There are two particular works of literature whose content contains an underlying critique of the medical profession. These two works of literature are " The Yellow Paper", written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and " Wit" by Margaret Edson.

" The Yellow Paper," tells the story of an unnamed woman (who is also the narrator of the story) who has recently given birth to a child. The woman is currently suffering from hysteria and post-partum depression. He husband John, takes her on vacation to a mansion to recuperate. When they arrive at the mansion, John confines her to a room upstairs which he thinks will be

good for mental wellbeing because she will be able to rest free from any stressful distractions (Gilman 12). However, as time proceeds, instead of getting better, she starts ascending into a state of psychosis. She starts obsessing over a yellow wallpaper and pattern that is the only visually stimulating item in this room in which she has been confined. She starts perceiving that there is another woman creeping behind the wallpaper in the room adjacent to hers, and she, therefore, starts tearing down this wallpaper hoping to rescue the woman. On the last day of the vacation, she locks herself in the room as she continues tearing the wallpaper. Her husband manages to find an extra key, makes his way into the room and finds his wife creeping around. He faints in shock as his wife exclaims that she has got put her confinement as she has managed to pull down the entire wallpaper. She is completely delusional at this moment and continues creeping all around the room even stepping over her now fainted husband oblivious to his presence.

“ The Yellow Wallpaper” is a scathing critique of the medical profession. The best proof of this is exhibited when the protagonist is forced to ascribe to a specific health intervention model. Here the medical profession is exhibited as one that does not listen to the wishes and the voices of its patients. As seen earlier the individuals, in this profession realize the huge power that they hold, and they, therefore, think that they have the ultimate say on almost every single health decision involving a patient. In the ‘ Yellow Wallpaper”, John, who is doctor, takes control of everything regarding his wife’s health without consulting her or even listening to her wishes. He instructs his wife to take certain medicine regimens without considering

what she wants herself. He tells her to take phosphites, phosphates tonics, journeys, exercise and air (Gilman). John also forbids his wife from engaging in any work (Gilman 23). However, it is ultimately revealed that all of John's prescriptions do not work because, in reality, the protagonist's condition does not get any better. Her condition in fact worsens, and she becomes delusional. Because she is not even consulted when it comes to the medical intervention, the protagonist considers it to be ineffectual. She would have preferred a different kind of intervention that she thought would have made her better. She states that she "disagrees with their ideas" and on a personal level, she states that she would have preferred "congenial work with some excitement and change" which she contends would have done her some good (Gilman 21). She however realizes how powerless she is as it is her husband who is in charge of every decision. The intervention model proposed by John fails in the end.

This scenario is a critique of the medical profession whereby the personal opinion of the patient is rarely considered. Although doctors and health experts have the knowledge and skills to make the best decisions for their patients, there are some scenarios where the patient himself or herself holds the key to their health and wellbeing (Suess 85). Therefore, even as health experts decide what is best for the patient and what can improve their condition, it is important to incorporate the input of the patient in the decision-making process. This obviously does not happen in the medical profession as the author of "The Yellow Wallpaper" shows.

Through this scenario, the author of "The Yellow Wallpaper" presents another deficiency of the medical profession. She shows how the lack of

sympathy, as well as the lack of emotional relationship between the health practitioner and the patient, can lead to the deterioration of the health of the patient instead of getting better. This aspect is visible across various medical institutions. Many health experts are cold and unsympathetic. They do not take the time to find out the amount of suffering that the patient is going through and, therefore, they fail to take appropriate actions to guarantee overall health of the patient (Suess 90). With such a medical model, it is easy to see why some patient's health would deteriorate instead of getting better. The author of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' has clearly identified this aspect in health settings and even in personalized care, and this is she why brings out the issue so vividly in this short story.

A comprehensive critique of the medical profession is also present in Margaret Edson's 'Wit'. Wit is about Dr. Vivian Bearing, an English professor suffering from ovarian cancer. The play opens with her doctor informing her about her ovarian cancer diagnosis. The doctor then suggests that she take part in an eight-month full-dose, experimental and aggressive chemotherapy program. The play depicts her journey through this program and the various experiences that she goes through.

Just like in the 'The Yellow Wallpaper', the author of Wit also presents a critique of the medical profession. The medical profession comes across as inconsiderate of the patient's emotional wellbeing. Although they may not show it outwardly, doctors are presented as unsympathetic and cold. They lack any type of compassion for their patients and are simply interested in performing their own selfish interests.

This is perhaps proven by the fact that Bearing is subjected to an

experimental procedure that has not actually been experimentally proven to work. The chemotherapy session that she is subject to is part of an experimental research and therefore for the most part, the doctors involved in her recuperation process barely view her as an object for research. All the actions and interventions administered to her for the most part are for research purposes. This is something that is very common in the medical field. In many instances, medical research involves real patients to determine, for example, the viability of a particular intervention process. When patients are brought into a health setting having symptoms of a particular condition that doctors or health experts desire to research, it is suggested to the patients that they volunteer for this experiment (Garner 318). The method used to convince patients is very cunning indeed. Patients are sometimes told that there is no alternative, and the intervention proposed and that is still in the experimental phase is the best option (Garner 320). Patients are usually left with no choice than to agree to go ahead with the procedure. Unfortunately in such a scenario, the interests of the practitioners takes precedence over those of the patients.

These aspects are all present in the play ' Wit'. When Bearing is receiving care, she is merely treated as an object of research by the doctors. They do care about her personal suffering at all. For example, she is taken through long sessions of treatment without breaks and this further accentuates her suffering and at the same time depicts the cold-hearted nature of the medical professionals.

Bearing herself observes this and starts regretting why she agreed to go on with chemotherapy in the first place. The indifferent treatment that she

receives at the hospital is justified by the doctor's obsession with her as an object of research (Edson 34). She resigns herself to dying as she simply cannot take anymore the huge suffering that's he is going through. It is here that she signs the dreaded ' Do Not Resuscitate " order (Edson 36). At this point, the incompetence and the cold-heartedness nature of the medical profession is revealed, and it is shown how the interests and the wishes of the patient are never an item of consideration. Bearing had clearly signed a " Do Not Resuscitate Order". However, when she suffers a cardiac arrest, her wishes are completely ignored. Her requests to die peacefully are ignored and the doctor at hand initiates a resuscitation claiming the he needs her so that he can continue with his study (Edson 39).

The above scenario not only exhibits the insensitive nature of the medical profession and the cold-heartedness of many professionals but also exhibits just how unethical the medical profession can be. The author clearly wants to show how unethical the medical professional is by depicting the contravention of the patient's wishes not to be resuscitated for the simple reason that doctors want to continue studying her.

Conclusion

The value of medicine and medical professionals in the society cannot be understated and underestimated. Medical professionals are the ones that the society consults when diseases and illnesses strike. Their role is made even more important due to the fact that diseases are illnesses are inevitable aspects in every society. Unfortunately, the huge power invested in this profession can sometimes be the source of many discrepancies. These discrepancies usually involve the abandonment of a patient's emotional

needs and wishes. The health provider's interests take precedence over those of patients; something which is clearly dangerous. The two works of literature; *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Wit* critique this undesirable nature of the medical profession and perhaps shows that there is room for change and improvement.

Works Cited

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