

Chapter 1- introduction: the scope of medical anthropology

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



Chapter 1- Introduction: the scope of medical anthropology - Medical anthro:

- How people in diff cultures explain the causes of ill health , types of treatment they believe in and whom they turn to when ill - Anthropology - "The study of man" (several branches) 1) Physical Anthropology - Human biology - Study of evolution of humans - Concerned with explaining the causes of present diversity of human populations 1) Material Anthropology - Deals with art and artifacts of humankind, present and past 1) Social and Cultural Anthropology - Comparative study of present day human societies and their cultural systems (2 diff approaches) o Social: - Emphasizes social dimensions of human life - People are social animals, organized into groups that regulate and perpetuate themselves o Cultural: - System's of symbols, ideas and meanings that comprise a culture and of which social organization is just an expression - Keensing and Strathern o SOCIETY; total social system whose members share a common language and cultural tradition - Boundaries of societies are vague; people organize themselves into various groups, hierarchies and roles within a given society THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE: - Taylor's definition of culture o Complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society - Keensing and Stathern o Systems of shared ideas, systems of concepts and rules and meanings that underlie and are expressed in the ways that human beings live - From these definitions o Culture is the set of guidelines that individuals inherit as members of a particular society. o Provides them with a way of transmitting these guidelines to the next generation o Can be seen as an inherited " lens" through which the individual perceives and understands the world that he

inhabits and learns how to live within it - Enculturation: slowly acquires the cultural 'lens' of that society - Edward T. Hall o 3 different levels of culture - Tertiary level culture - Explicit manifest culture; visible to the outsider - Ex: social rituals, traditional dress, national cuisine and festive occasions, - Secondary level culture - Underlying rules and assumptions are known to the members of the group but rarely shared with outsiders - Primary level culture - Rules are known to all, obeyed by all but seldom if ever stated - Deeper levels are most hidden, stable and resistant to change - Leach o All societies have more than one culture within their borders o Ex: social stratification into social classes castes or ranks and each stratum is marked by its own distinctive cultural attribution - Acculturation: o Incorporate some of the cultural attributes of the larger society but others will not. - Subcultures: o People form a group apart, with their own concepts, rules and social organizations o Ex: Doctors, lawyers, (career cultures) - People acquire a very diff. perspective on life from those who are outside the profession - Complex societies are never homogenous, many different views of the world coexisting. - Culture is therefore a fluid concept o Most societies are undergoing change and adaptation - Biculturalism: o Individuals, families and even communities can occupy 2 or more cultures of subcultures. o Very true for immigrants

The Context of Culture - Many influences on health related beliefs and behaviors; 1. Individual Factors 2. Educational Factors 3. Socio-economic Factors 4. Environmental Factors

Misuses of the concept of culture - Cant make broad generalizations about the members of any human group