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The Power of Knowledge

Throughout this course, as students, we were expected to read various works of literature that interrelated the works of medicine. Even though the connection between writing and the medical world was greatly emphasized, I never realized what the context was until the COVID-19 pandemic settled. Throughout this pandemic, where we only have our thoughts and our screens, knowledge has become crucial. Knowledge aids the learning and understanding of the virus because it provides the truth, regardless of how it is transmitted. In class, we have analyzed various works of literature, and they have shown that knowledge helps physicians to express their scientific narratives and can also emphasize the importance of health in illness and disease.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the home has become the workplace, the school, the designated quarantine area. As a society, we have shifted into the technological world and there is a greater reliance on the information that comes across our screen. Social media is the medium for doctors, nurses, and any of the healthcare workers to voice all their expertise about COVID-19. Health professionals have shown the true importance of sharing what they know. For instance, Elizabeth Brown mentioned the significance of the media during this pandemic, she mentions:

These snap[s]hots helped give Americans a better sense of the scope of the threat posed by COVID-19 at a time when the messages coming from official channels were conflicting and confusing. They also illustrated how various social responses could play out—giving credence to calls here for "social distancing" and spurring measures to make room in medical facilities. (Brown, par. 4)

Brown clearly outlines the essentials that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other forms of media have brought on the scope of the virus. Experts have provided different forms of knowledge throughout the pandemic, that briefs us, and deems theories and rumors as irrelevant. Resulting in a platform for healthcare officials to provide the health awareness that we deserve to know throughout these baffling times. Similarly, in our course readings, George Eliot provided a unique narrative that examines what knowledge takes in medicine but is presented as a fictional story. Eliot shows the entity of medicine with Tertius Lydgate, in which his medical ambition for Middlemarch, shows what healthcare workers strive for now. Eliot said, "I should not care for my profession if I did not believe that better methods were to be found and enforced there was as well as everywhere else" (Eliot 117). Lydgate is characterized as an aspiring physician that came to Middlemarch, who was on a quest for knowledge to further his studies, for both his benefit, and also for the wellbeing of the population at large. There is a similitude between Lydgate and healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, where both use their acquired knowledge to find new methods and innovate medicine, to inform and to protect the public. Lydgate's focus on acquiring new methods resides in healthcare professionals as well, when they use social media as their medium of knowledge transmission, aiming to refine medicine. The media has shown the new extent of knowledge that can be passed on from healthcare workers to any individual, so that knowledge not only creates a sense of experience and awareness in a particular area or topic, but can also create the ultimate measures of precautions during this pandemic.

Furthermore, as we progressed through the class, the concept of knowledge took on a new spectrum, because it was transparently crucial in patient-physician interactions. With COVID-19, the power of knowledge has transformed our current society; it provides education that allows people to take control of the situation through the application of what is shared. Knowledge during this pandemic has helped with the interchange of information between physicians and their patients as well as the population at large. In this class, after reading both humanistic and medical books, we understood that knowledge not only has the power to strengthen the evidence of a study, or an experiment, but it also contributes to patients gaining trust, and experiences when they interact with their physician. For example, we read *Two Kinds of Decay* by Sarah Manguso. Manguso reflects on the journey through her disease, CIDP, which

she did not know until she was hospitalized. Manguso said, “.once I was in Intensive Care, my blood already churning through a machine, when a nurse explained to me that if the strength of my diaphragm weakened five more pounds per square inch of air pressure, I’d be intubated through a hole in my neck” (Manguso 9). Manguso showed the significance of the shared expertise and awareness within a healthcare-professional and patient interaction. Though the information disclosed to Manguso is graphic and tragic, it shows the significance of collaborating with the patients, to prevent them from being blindsided or left in the dark of their illness diagnosis. Manguso then referred to nurses in her narrative later on, describing how they became an aid to her decisions and company through her journey. Knowledge is crucial in medicine during this pandemic, however, it also helps the public carry out actions to reduce the risk of contracting the disease, as well as preventing it from spreading.

Nowadays, the patient-physician interaction does not exclude any individual during the COVID-19 pandemic. Everybody in the world is classified as the patient during this virus. Physicians have revolutionized doctor-patient interactions during social distancing where they are taking on the technological world. Doctors are not only willing to consult at a distance and will do here and are also enclosing the information that patients need during the pandemic. The concept of the power of knowledge was also analyzed by Hippocrates and referred to in *Hippocratic Writings*. Hippocrates was establishing a code of behavior for medical professionals, recognizing knowledge as a “holy matter,” where it can be “revealed only to holy men. Such things must not be made known to the profane until they are initiated into the mysteries of science” (The Canon 69). Hippocrates accentuates what healthcare professionals hold within their hard-earned knowledge, which bestows power. The power of knowledge has become a message in our society today; it empowers others to follow health precautions and carry out proper care. Dr. Hotez uses Twitter, where he approaches the pandemic electronically “to explain my thinking about an important or emerging infection” (Berg 13). Berg emphasizes the same patterns that physicians have shown in both Literature and Medicine, and during the narratives emerging about this pandemic, to provide knowledge. Berg also addresses the meticulousness of the knowledge that is spreading, as the aim of healthcare workers is to address COVID-19 concerns at large.

Literature and Medicine texts reiterated the impact of the power of knowledge, which is not only delivered through narratives, as did Eliot transmit it through a story, or Manguso’s memoir but is also a transmitter of awareness. Also, the potency of knowledge extends to a doctor’s appointment, or a checkup, today, and it has aided the public at large to familiarize themselves with the COVID-19 disease. *Hippocratic Writings* mentions, “Science and opinion are two different things; science is the father of knowledge but opinion breeds ignorance” (The Canon 69). This idea entitles the surging concerns about the information that people are obtaining, and what they choose as their “knowledge.” The difference is that those who seek factual and “holy” knowledge, will be granted a broader scope of the pandemic, and can pass it on to others like healthcare professionals are doing in social media.

Works Cited

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