



An Uneasy Subjection: The Emergency Room Encounters of Health Professionals and Women with Cardiac Symptoms

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Research Questions

- How does the ER encounter serve to construct the identity, understandings and practices for women with symptoms of heart disease as well as health professionals?
- In what ways are the articulated understandings and practices of women with symptoms of heart disease divergent from those of health professionals?

Research Method

“Analytics of Interpretive Practice”
(Holstein & Gubrium, 2005)

Discourse analysis

- Combines ethnomethodologic and Foucauldian perspective

Discourse

- Beliefs and practices regarding health and illness are constructed and reinforced repeatedly through discourse
- Institutions such as hospitals provide resources for this ongoing construction

Data Collection

- Field observation
 - shadowing of nurses and physicians in their practice
- Interviews:
 - Women who have sought care in the Emergency Room
 - Health professionals working in the Emergency Room



Field Observations

***The Emergency Room: The
portal through which each
must pass***

Field Observations

***Performance/Construction of
Identity that 'fits' through the slit
in the triage window***

***CTAS Scoring: A Mechanism of
Power***



Field Observations

***Many Urgent and Dangerous Issues
Visibly Hang in the Balance***

***Constant Threat of Impending
Chaos***



Field Observations

***Constant orientation of health
professionals to limited
resources***



Field Observations

***Enduring Professional
Dissonance: Surrendering to
the Peril***



Field Observations

***Computer Technology:
A Mechanism of Power
A Form of Constraint***



Field Observations

***Determinants of Health a little
closer to the surface here***

***And yet...missing in the
discourse***



Field Observations

Disciplining Patient Presentations

Interviews with Women

Needing to convey the complexities of their lives

Interviews with Women

***Resistance to accepting new
identity as having cardiac
disease***

Interviews with Women

***Presenting themselves as
competent and deserving
health care recipients....yet
Reluctantly in charge of their
precarious health***



Interviews with Women

***Orientation to Time: Invoking
the Discourse of Biomedicine
and Efficiency***

Interviews with Women

***Protecting their families and
significant others***

Interviews with Women

***Constant surveillance of themselves
and their day to day practices:***

***Constant orientation to their own
mortality:***

Overwhelming anxiety



Interviews with Women

Outsiders in their health care experiences



Interviews with Women

Losing trust in health care



Interviews with Health Professionals

Strong orientation to biomedical perspective

Described 'good' practice in terms of efficiency, multitasking, ability to attend to life threatening events efficiently



Interviews with Health Professionals

***Continually asked to reflect on
and justify their way of
practicing***



Interviews with Health Professionals

***A New Technique of Assessing
Patients: Changing the Gaze of
Health Professionals***



Interviews with Health Professionals

Acknowledging the Peril



Implications for Health Professionals

Have the patients' lives and circumstances become invisible or irrelevant in the current health care milieu?



Implications for Health Professionals

***Have we allowed our practice
to be seduced into aligning
with the institutional discourse
of efficiency?***



Implications for Health Professionals

Challenging the discourse of limited resources

Implications for Health Professionals

Ensuring the enactment of “just compassion” in our care

Maxwell, B. (2009). Just compassion: Implications for the ethics of the scarcity paradigm in clinical healthcare provision. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 35, 219-233.



Implications for Health Professionals

***What are the larger health
policy implications?***



Implications for Health Professionals

Optimizing care within the healthcare encounter itself



Implications for Health Professionals

***Attention to the roar of the everyday
battle in which health is really being
managed***



Thank you

***I invite your comments or
questions***