

## The Sociology of Health, Illness and Medicine

:Topics in Medical Sociology

Epidemiology

Public health efforts and other policy issues

Formal organizational aspects of healthcare

Social and cultural influences on health and illness

The socialization of caregivers

Micro-politics" among practitioners in healthcare"

Caregiver-patient interaction

Epidemiology

.Epidemiology is the study of the extent and population-based spread of disease

Epidemiologists might examine genetic, biological and physical environmental factors in  
.addition to social factors

:Some examples of the uses of epidemiology

AIDS, TB and other communicable diseases

Hantavirus, "Mad Cow" (SJV) and other animal-borne diseases

Mental illness and its environmental correlates

.and many others. Epidemiology is an important tool for managing public health ...

## Public Health Efforts and their Impact on Death and Disease

.Doctors treat "patients"; public health officers treat communities and societies

People tend to consider new medical "breakthroughs" in contributing to reductions in  
.mortality and morbidity

However, public health and "social hygiene" efforts have contributed far more to health  
:than have medical measures

.In 1900, 44% of deaths in N America were due to 11 infectious diseases

.By 1980, that figure was less than 5%



Nowadays, most deaths are due to the three major chronic conditions: heart disease, cancer and stroke

## The Organization of Healthcare

Healthcare services serve two functions: Direct service functions, and supportive or ancillary functions

:Direct Service

Individual, patient-based care

Community-based care

:Ancillary functions

Finance

Suppliers

Regulation

Representation

Research

Consulting

## Social and Cultural Impacts on Health

.One's position in a social structure influences one's health in numerous ways

Gender

Socioeconomic status

Occupation

Race and ethnicity

Age

## Social and Cultural Impacts on Health

All of these factors influence

Differential exposure to pathogenic or salutary circumstances .\



Vulnerability to disease .۲

Access to healthcare resources .۳

### The Socialization of Caregivers

:Focus on doctors

Student doctors acquire knowledge to accomplish "hypothesis testing" in medical encounters

### The Socialization of Caregivers

Medical school is thus a period of socialization in which students acquire new competencies

؟What about informal socialization

.Doctors learn about professional hierarchies

:Doctors learn to think of patients "objectively," ie

"Don't let emotions get in the way"

The patient is an "object," an organism that provides data

Doctors acquire sense of selves in the world

### Medical Micropolitics

.Medical care is NOT doctor care

Nurses

Physiotherapists

Counsellors

Volunteers

Orderlies

“.Doctors are "team leaders

The "Doctor-Nurse Game": How nurses orient to doctors to perform work but still preserve hierarchy

### Caregiver-Patient Interaction

Focus on Doctor-Patient



Hypothesis-testing approach: Doctor asks questions; patient answers. Medical interviewing instruction reinforces this

### Caregiver-Patient Interaction

:Patient's role

.Answer questions

.Don't speak unless spoken to

.Don't ask questions

.Don't offer diagnoses

".However, medical complaints are often cast as questions or as "candidate diagnoses

.Doctors SHOULD learn to listen and to encourage questioning and talk on patients' part