Weaving the Kitchen Cupboard into Healthcare Practice

*Lessons from Ethnographic Observations of Home Health Care in the U.S. Midwest*

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Overview

- Non-reductive qualitative approach
- Interlinkages between Food and Health
- The Landscapes of Human Well-Being
Methods

7 months of Ethnographic Fieldwork
Home Health Clinicians
Patients & Loved Ones
30 Shared Visits
19 Interviews
Participant Observation
COVID Impact
What possibilities arise for health and care when we attend more fully to food and eating as central to human health and healing?
The official focus of the dietetics consult may be Mr. W’s joint medical and dietary needs, but Amy’s intervention is at the level of the household and the interrelations of kinship, care, and food therein. Her overarching message:

*We can work with where you are, with what you have, with how your family lives, and with what feels familiar and comforting.*
1. Food and nutrition are pivotal to patients’ ability to benefit from health care.

2. Food as a site at which health care can attune to the needs of patients wholly situated in relationship with multidimensional contexts.
“how much may be missed when medical treatment focuses on the suffering or wellness of the individual patient-body”?

Yates-Doerr and Carney (2016, 316)
Mr. C, having not yet eaten that day, was quite literally without sufficient nutrition to participate in physical therapy. But the plate of food Heather fixed for Mr. C provided nourishment beyond the calories it contained; it signified the world-repairing help, support, attunement, and care that Mr. C needed in order to be well.
“our ‘world’ being comprised of all the interwoven components of a ‘complex, life-sustaining web’”


“containing costs and maximising efficiency has come to mute the moral, emotional, religious, and aesthetic expressions of patients and caregivers”

Kleinman (2012, 1550)


“The Kitchen Cupboard”

A site for attuned practicality, attention to context

Material contents

Capacity to signify multiple forms of precarity

Ebbs and flows of daily life, relations

New possibilities in health, care?
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