

Week 7 Reading Response
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Peter Conrad on Professionalism

This week's reading introduced me to a new perspective on the medical profession. Conrad highlights a brief history of medical practice throughout human history (although it was European centric and ignored the rest of the world) and how it transformed into what we have today. Growing up in the USA, I always assumed that the reason for the formalized medical industry with a strict set of qualifications was because it was a tried and true system, that it yielded competent professionals who can treat various illnesses. I began to question the system in place in the US as I learned that other nations don't require close to decade of education before allowing individuals to practice medicine. Conrad's text highlights that the system in place is not because it was the best one but because of racism, sexism, elitism and greed that created a monopoly on medical treatments. That is not to say that the current professionalism of the medical industry is bad, it has yielded various formalized treatments that save lives, but at the same time it comes with negatives by limiting options for treatment. Recently there has been a rise of newer medical professions outside the classic M.D. physician like the physicians assistant, which allows for people to practice medicine sooner than they would if they were pursuing an M.D., but it is still locked within the same system instituted by the AMA.