

Publication

Their view: difficulties and challenges of patients and physicians in cross-cultural encounters and a medical ethics perspective

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Background: In today's super-diverse societies, communication and interaction in clinical encounters are increasingly shaped by linguistic, cultural, social and ethnic complexities. It is crucial to better understand the difficulties patients with migration background and healthcare professionals experience in their shared clinical encounters and to explore ethical aspects involved. Methods: We accompanied 32 migrant patients (16 of Albanian and Turkish origin each) during their medical encounters at two outpatient clinics using an ethnographic approach (participant observation and semi-structured interviews with patients and healthcare professionals). Overall, data of 34 interviews with patients and physicians on how they perceived their encounter and which difficulties they experienced are presented. We contrasted the perspectives on the difficult aspects and explore ethical questions surrounding the involved issues. Results: Patients and physicians describe similar problem areas, but they have diverging perspectives on them. Two main themes were identified by both patients and physicians: >patients' behaviour in relation to doctors' advice< and >relationship issues<. Conclusions: A deeper understanding of the difficulties and challenges that can arise in cross-cultural settings could be provided by bringing together healthcare professionals' and patients' perspectives on how a cross-cultural clinical encounter is perceived. Ethical aspects surrounding some of the difficulties could be highlighted and should get more attention in clinical practice and research.

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