



MEDICINA NEI SECOLI

ARTE E SCIENZA

CURE AND CARE

EDITED BY

*Lorenzo Speranza
and
Angela Palmieri*



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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

INTRODUCTION

LORENZO SPERANZA AND ANGELA PALMIERI P. 1

LA "CURA": TRA DIMENSIONI TERAPEUTICHE, ESISTENZIALI ED EDUCATIVE

M. BENEDETTA GAMBACORTI-PASSERINI E LUCIA ZANNINI P. 29

TWO DAYS IN THE TV-CLINIC, LOOKING FOR SOME CARE

VALENTINA CAPPI P. 55

MIDWIFERY PROFESSION IN RUSSIA: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND EVERYDAY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

EKATERINA BOROZDINA P. 89

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NURSING PROFESSION IN ITALY: FROM CARE TO CURE OR A DIFFERENT FORM OF CARE?

BARBARA SENA AND ALESSANDRO STIEVANO P. 111

NURSES CARE, DOCTORS CURE: THE RACIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WORK FOR BLACK MEN IN GENDERED OCCUPATIONS

ADIA HARVEY WINGFIELD P. 133

CARING FOR THE INCURABLE. THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PERSON WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

GUIDO GIARELLI P. 151

CARE E CURE, COCCOLE E BISTURI. UNA RICERCA SU CLINICI E CHIRURGI

ANGELA PALMIERI E LORENZO SPERANZA P. 185

LA MEDICINA NARRATIVA IN PSICHIATRIA: UN MODO PER CURARE E PRENDERSI CURA.

ANTONIO VIRZÌ, SALVATORE DIPASQUALE, TIZIANA SALVATRICE LO MONACO,
Giovanni Previti e Sara Ruta P. 215

POSTFAZIONE

IL SIGNIFICATO DELLE CURE NELLA PERSONA ANZIANA.

LA PRESA IN CARICO NON RICONOSCE FRAMMENTAZIONI

MARCO TRABUCCHI E RENZO ROZZINI P. 235

Introduzione/*Introduction*

“Dr. House’s assistants waste no more time than him in chatting to the patient: while doing an encephalogram and monitoring a lady, first from behind a glass wall and then from a computer screen, at a certain time they notice that her heart-rate flat-lines. They leap up, worried that she may have arrested, and only then notice that she is no longer in the room!”

(Cappi, in this volume)

Subject

This volume presents some reflections on modern medicine by scholars of various disciplines. The *leitmotiv* of the various contributions is the focus on the dimensions of “cure” and “care”.

In Italian, the term *cura* describes both the elimination of the cause of a disorder or disease and a combination of procedures that refer to the informal form of assistance based on elements such as attention, encouragement, support, compassion. The English language, however, uses two different words to indicate the processes described above: cure and care. The first draws on the wealth of knowledge of scientific medicine and thus concerns the therapeutic methods that allow physicians to treat patients from an exclusively technical point of view; the second refers to the wealth of knowledge and practices which entail the personal involvement of the person administering the treatment with the person who is suffering.

Thus, curing and caring are, by definition, medical practices par excellence but, historically, the two concepts have taken different forms and have not always gone hand-in-hand. In the pre-scientific age, it was care that prevailed, so much so that healing, if and when it occurred, depended essentially on the recovery capacity of the patient’s organism and on the level of care of whoever provided

assistance: women, within the family; slaves, in the “valetudinarian” of ancient Rome; monks in medieval monasteries. From the late 1700s, care began to be accompanied progressively by cure: starting in hospitals within or in the vicinity of monasteries, in which various figures were alternated, of different training and social extraction (physicians, surgeons, barbers and assistant barbers) and later, with the emergence of clinical medicine, in structures in which systematic patient observation and scientific experimentation were practised¹. In the modern days, cure, benefiting from powerful diagnostic and therapeutic instruments, increasingly accentuated knowledge specialisation and new and sophisticated digital applications, guarantees certain and effective results for a large number of medical problems. The area of care, however, is much more restricted than in the past: it is to be hoped for but it is not taken into consideration in the biomedical standard that dominated medical science nearly all the way through the 1900s. In fact, in this model – which presumes the clear separation of mind and body – disease is a deviation from the biological norm; the suffering of a patient can only refer to physical and biological causes; consequently, physicians must act on the disease and not on those who are suffering as a cause of the disease. Today, this “scientific” vision of medicine is widely perceived as “dehumanising”. Anthropologists, philosophers, physicians, educationalists, sociologists and historians agree on the observation that the passage from anamnesis and physical examination to a medical procedure dominated mainly by science and technology has not just brought the benefits of more effective results against diseases, but also a new attitude in considering the patient. In fact the patient is an “organism” that can be “measured” and studied in detail right down to the very last cell. In this model, the traditional doctor-patient relationship – in which the one who cures does not just cure but, by combining the clinical dimension to that of an anthropological nature, “takes care”, in the wider sense, of whom is not well

Introduction

– is transformed into an encounter between therapist and disease, understood in the purely biological sense of the word. The patient as an individual almost disappears from the physicians' viewpoint, insofar as, in the treatment methods, identifying and understanding in-depth the psychological and social elements of his medical history (who is the person that needs to be treated, what are his background, his preferences, his expectations) is irrelevant. And that is not all. If the doctor-patient relationship is not a direct exchange between two subjective entities but only the encounter between an object (the diseased organ-patient) and a subject (the physician), it is inevitable that the professional expert also becomes the unique repository of knowledge and power.

It is not by chance that the asymmetry of knowledge/power of the doctor-patient relationship has been highlighted by several sociologists, especially in the years in which the biomedical paradigm was universally accepted. Talcott Parsons (1951 e 1954)², for example, focusing on the social function of physicians (protecting society from disease or, in functionalist approach, neutralising the pushes towards deviancy) and on certain features of medical practice (the right to access the human body, to prescribe medicines, to carry out surgical operations and to sign death certificates), “justifies” the asymmetrical relationship between professional expert and patient based on the former's specific skill and on the commitment/disinterest that he/she injects into his/her working practices. Erving Goffman (1961)³, however, takes a different standpoint, linking the asymmetrical condition of the relationship between the one who cures and the one who is cured to the fragile situation of the individual entering the role of “sick person”: in the exchange with the physician, the ill person appears helpless, demoralised by the feeling of having lost part of their identity. Both in Parson's and Goffman's reflections, therefore, the theme of power is of central importance: the physician exerts an explicit power on the patient which is supported by the purpose behind

it, i.e. the wellbeing of the sick individual. In relation to this purpose, he can establish a diagnosis, indicate the treatment he believes suitable and carry out that treatment. All that the patients can do is “to trust” and “to entrust”: they can only presume that, given that the national authorities have granted physicians the monopoly over the practice of medicine, they must really be the most competent figures in the field of treating illness.

Care, cure and a typology of doctor-patient relationships

In the 1970s, Eliot Freidson⁴ hypothesised the shattering of medical dominance, that is to say the traditional medical power, starting with the presumption that the doctor-patient relationship can also be conflicting, insofar as it may reflect, within, all the social conditioning of the actors involved in the relationship deriving from the networks to which they belong. This means that, in the treatment relationship, the patient may become the “active” subject, that is to say acquire more “power”, as far as to make the relationship conflicting.

The interactionist sociologist, following Thomas Szasz and Mark Hollander’s typology of doctor-patient relationships⁵, notes that

Under some circumstances -as in surgery and electroconvulsive therapy- the patient must be thoroughly immobilized and passive, wholly submissive to the activity of the physician. The work itself requires such minimal interaction [...] This model for interaction Szasz and Hollander call activity-passivity. In it, the patient is a passive object. The second treatment situation [...] is one in which the patient’s consent to accept advice and to follow it if necessary [...] Since he suffers [...] he seeks help and he is ready and willing to “cooperate”. When he turns to the physician, he places [him] in a position of power [...] The interaction is expected to follow the model of guidance-cooperation [...] The patient [...] assumes a less passive role than if he were anesthetized but a passive role nonetheless [...] Finally, there is the model of mutual participation, found where patients are able or are required to take care of themselves -as in the case [...] of some chronic illnesses like diabetes [...] Here, “the physician does not profess to know

Introduction

exactly what is best for the patient. The search for this becomes the essence of the therapeutic interaction". Obviously, some forms of psychotherapy fall here. Szasz and Hollander's scheme, however, is defective logically and empirically [...] Logic and fact do, however, require recognition, and they dictate the suggestion of two other patterns of interaction -one in which the patient guides and the physician cooperates, and one in which the patient is active and the physician passive. [While] it is difficult to imagine an empirical instance of the latter possibility [...] For the former instance, however, we may find empirical examples in a fair number of the interactions in client-dependent practices, particularly where the practice is economically unstable and the clientele of high economic, political, and social status⁶.

This last situation reminds us, curiously, of the “London stage” of Dr Manson in *The Citadel*, the famous novel by Cronin⁷. In London, as well as the financial aspects, Manson becomes aware of the status or prestige that the profession can bestow. He has the chance to meet the best established physicians in the city: those who have their practices in the richest areas and have their enormous salaries ensured by wealthy, hypochondriac patients. Very soon, however, he realises that his training counts for very little with his new, wealthy patients. First of all, because these patients visit their physician even for insignificant malaise (or presumed illness); then because such patients demand of their physician qualities including some of a not exactly professional nature, such as, for example, elegance of dress and luxury waiting rooms. In short, we are faced with, as Freidson would say, a classic system of client-dependent “profane reference”, which maximises the offer of care, perhaps in a not entirely disinterested manner.

Freidson’s observations coincide, more or less, with the diffusion of the bio-psycho-social model in the field of medicine, which perceives disease as related to the individual experience of the person. Basically, in this model, the condition of illness is not simply equated to a biological imbalance, but is influenced by psychological and social elements that can condition patient reactions and, therefore,

their pathway to recovery. Indeed, among the key elements of the bio-psycho-social paradigm, explicit reference is made to the way in which the doctor-patient relationship must develop: the professional experts cannot limit themselves to the identification of the symptom and, thus, of the correct diagnosis, but they must also give the patients enough room to articulate their worries, expectations, achieving a shared understanding of the patients' narrative, with the patients. And, as we will see further on, the only area in which this seems to occur is in psychiatry, where the narrative method represents a way of curing and caring. Only after having listened to the patient's point of view, his direction in life, can the physician formulate a diagnosis and treatment plan⁸. For this reason, the bio-psycho-social approach is also defined as *patient-centred*, because is characterised by the shift to a more equal doctor-patient relationship, in which the sick person is considered an active subject in his own recovery. In effect, with the advent of this new paradigm, the *compliance*, which presumes an act of absolute faith in the physician - because the patient does not have the knowledge to deal with the situations deriving from the disease from which he is suffering - becomes *concordance*, i.e. the involvement of the patient in the decisions regarding health and, above all, in the management of chronic and debilitating diseases⁹. Going back to Freidson, and his revisititation of Szasz and Mark Hollander's work, the bio-psycho-social approach is nothing other than the model of "mutual participation".

The shift from one medical model to another also implies a change in *care* and *cure* dimensions. In the biomedical model, everything is centred on the disease and on the expert who is treating the disease, considered to be the sole repository of knowledge and power. The content of the communication between physician and patient is limited, in fact, to the biological dimension of the disease and the role of the sick person is that of passive receiver of the decisions of the physician. In short, there is not much room for *care*, meant as listening,

Introduction

encouragement, support, compassion. In the bio-psycho-social paradigm, instead, the patient is actively involved because, to the physician, both the disease and the patient's experience of living with the disease are important. In taking on board the patient's history, the direction of life, the physician is inevitably personally involved with the person who suffers from a certain disease.

The in-depth analyses found in this volume are not designed to "measure" the diffusion of one paradigm as compared to the other, but aim at broadening our vision of *cure* and *care*, from different scholarly viewpoints.

In-depth analyses

In the first paper Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini and Lucia Zannini mainly focus on the transformations which the clinical practice has undergone, thanks to whom the concept of "taking care" of the patient has gained increasing attention. The two authors begin with the observation that the concept of "cure" dates back to the origins of Western culture and refers to symbolic dimensions that universally invest the existence of man. Thus they remind us of one of the fables of Igino (1st century. B.C.)¹⁰, in which the story goes that Cure, whilst crossing a river, saw some mud and used it to create and model man. A quarrel then broke out over the paternity of man, between Jupiter, who had infused his spirit and Earth, who had provided the raw material. Saturn, Time, was given the task of resolving the issue and he ruled that the spirit of man, upon his death, should go to Jupiter, and his body to Earth. "But because it was Cure who had first shaped this being, he shall belong to Cure for as long as he lives"¹¹. In this respect, going back to that conveyed by the fable, Heidegger presents an extremely significant aspect of cure: it is not just a method of acting and interacting between men, but is also a structural and founding feature of existence itself.

In particular, to highlight the different meanings of “cure”, it is useful to explore the different “clinical” attitudes adopted by western medical science over the centuries. The term “clinical” (from the Greek noun *klinē*, bed, and by the corresponding verb *klinēin*, bend over) originally indicates the typical action by the doctor of bending over the patient on his bed to perform a “check-up” and establish a therapeutic relationship: this clinical relationship involves the creation of particular knowledge, which requires both the technical skills and the capacity of the physician to create a compassionate relationship.

*The Birth of the Clinic*¹², in which Michel Foucault presents the development of the medical *regard* (gaze) in western science, is exemplary in order to understand the evolution of the concepts of “clinic”, “cure” and “treatment/therapy”. Western medical practice has its origins in Hippocratic medicine¹³, focused on the ethics of overall care of the individual¹⁴, and Foucault demonstrates how far this has been gradually built based on a “gaze” that aims to break up the body into its parts in search of a disease. In this respect, therapeutic relations aimed at curing the individual have shifted, over the centuries, towards curing the disease, the diseased organ. Foucault’s main reference, in this regard, is François Broussais, who, around 1820, introduced the concept of disease, to replace the diseased body, as a subject of medical science. This change also implied a renewed perception of death: through the study of corpses, in fact, death became a positive foundation on which to build further knowledge.

Thinking of cure as “care”, instead, leads the thought to take on a more educational dimension: educational care, indeed, is basically acting towards the development of existential planning, the genuine interest of man in the development of another man. Education and educational therapy can make a particular contribution to the activity of the physician with regard to interpretative and significant skills¹⁵ because educational care reveals significance opportunities for every man, with a strong interest in the stories of lives being built: “If a

Introduction

situation is classified within an ‘already given’, you can’t encourage the opening up of a ‘still possible’. This need for meaning is the opening up of the project of oneself”¹⁶.

Such aspects are revealed to be particularly relevant for those physicians involved in long-term and continuous treatment of patients, thus acting on diseases that affect people’s existence and daily lives. In the second chapter Valentina Cappi asks herself how is care represented on television. Is it depicted in a univocal or heterogeneous way? Are care and cure represented as exclusive or complementary activities? Who is attributed predominantly certain skills (technical or relief support) or the position of carer (doctors, nurses, patients themselves or their relatives)? It is important to answer these questions for many reasons, particularly because television is identified by Italians as the third most important source of health information¹⁷. In order to grasp what kinds of representations of care are broadcast to Italian spectators on a daily basis, she constructed a sample from two days of digital terrestrial programming in March 2015, picking one weekday and one from the weekend, at the distance of a fortnight. By consulting the listings of the most popular networks in the weekly magazine *Film TV*, she identified those programmes that had explicit health and medical themes, recorded them via a Sky HD decoder, and watched them back at a later moment.

One common feature emerges from a brief examination of the selected programmes: healthcare, as far as health professionals are concerned, appears predominantly as a mode of *curing*, as therapeutic techniques, rational actions that aim to repair the body and interventions from a kind of medicine that “has conceived of itself as a science, albeit an applied science, that is practical and professional: it is ‘knowing what to do’ when facing disease, imbalance, disability”¹⁸. On the other hand, healthcare intended as *care* - its personal dimension that refers more to the ability to take care of others, to “provide answers that are not necessarily and not only of a technical

nature”¹⁹ – is barely hinted at. Care does not appear to feature within the primary responsibilities of healthcare professionals (doctors or nurses) and for that reason is entrusted to groups of peers, affected family members or via the self-care of the patient.

At the end of this overview of programming, it is possible to maintain that care and cure are aspects of medicine that are depicted with different grades of complexity according to the genre of the programme in which they feature. In scientific-informative shows *Elisir* and *Medicina 33* cure and its related aspects prevail. The only emphases of the show relating to care are those which address prevention, that in any case call for the patient to adopt their own responsibility. Care is thus not presented as a prerogative, instrument or objective for health professionals. In medical dramas and documentaries, references to care are frequent, despite the fact that it is often one aspect of a hospital setting in which cure doubtless dominates. Professional care is a fundamental element of the healing process in the medical documentary *Mystery Diagnosis*, just as the professionalism of the midwives of *One Born Every Minute* is a quality that is taken for granted. Ultimately care is not excluded from televised representations of medicine, but the context in which it is most often portrayed is that of the fictional medical drama, the domain of the plausible but not of the real.

In the third chapter Ekaterina Borozdina considers how social and political changes in contemporary Russia have influenced professional project of midwives after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The research is based on analysis of secondary data and on interviews with 15 midwives from three Russian cities.

Many distinctive features of contemporary Russian maternity healthcare are inherited from the model that Soviet medicine took by 1960s and doctor-patient relations in this context took a form of triangle: doctor-patient-state²⁰. Physicians, unlike their American counterparts, lacked control over conditions and content of their

Introduction

work. Moreover, as a result of devaluation of health care professionals in Soviet society, “feminization” of medical profession was very high. Obstetrics and gynaecology (along with pediatrics) constituted the most clear indicator of this trend. In early 1970s women in these fields reached 90%²¹. At the same time, the state guaranteed medical dominance through preference to obstetrical care. There was no higher education for midwifery in the country and midwives were not allowed to attend deliveries without doctor’s supervision or to consult women during pregnancy.

Structure of state maternity healthcare was based on a two-tier system. Women’s clinics (*zhenskaya konsul’tatsiya*) provided services for gynecological patients and pregnant women, while birthing hospitals (*rodil’niy dom*) took care of births. Such division also had a negative impact on midwives as a professional group. Fragmentation of maternity services led to the fragmentation of midwives’ skills and knowledge, and split the midwifery profession. However, in early 1980s a homebirth movement began in the country. Ideology of the movement differed from ideology of western midwifery and patients’ movements in two crucial ways. First, as the vast majority of Russian obstetricians were women, no opposition was constructed between a male-doctor and a female-midwife²². Second, technologization of childbirth and extensive medical control over it were not the main targets of the critique put forward by Soviet homebirth proponents. Movement’s agenda was grounded in parental discontent with low quality of medical services and state bureaucratic control over childbearing and childrearing.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian healthcare experienced a chain of reforms oriented to market principles. System of health insurance was introduced. State expenditures on healthcare were cut down, but the government allowed for private medical practice and for provision of commercial medical services in state hospitals and clinics. This created a window of opportunity

for those midwives who aimed at gaining more professional autonomy answering to the demands of those wealthy clients who wanted to make informed decisions about childbirth (including the choice of childbirth assistant) and that remind us the situation of “mutual participation” in the Szasz and Hollander’s typology of doctor-patient relationships²³. One of such services introduced in hospitals was a so-called “individual delivery”, in the frame of which a woman was able to choose an obstetrician and a midwife, who would help her during labor. In some hospitals women, who opted for “individual delivery”, could decide to give birth with a midwife alone, with a doctor being nearby in case of emergency.

In mid 2000s another stage of the development of Russian maternity healthcare begun. It can be described in terms of restoration of extensive state control over the sphere and its subsequent politicization. This trend reflected pronatalist policy orientation, seen as the solution for the “demographic crisis”²⁴. Thus, while the general trend in healthcare organization was oriented to market criteria, authorities tried to make reproductive healthcare services available and free of charge for almost all categories of women.

Midwives who have experience of work at late-Soviet period emphasize that changes provoked in healthcare by liberal reforms have contributed to the diminishing of the midwife’s role in hospital labor. As we have already described above, authority of a midwife rests on negotiations with a doctor. But in the context of healthcare liberalization and restoration of state control over the maternity care, adherence to official rules and formal distribution of responsibilities becomes more and more prominent. Thus, relational logic of care²⁵ is being replaced at birthing hospitals by the logic of law, which is not in midwives’ favor.

The Russian scholar concludes that the formation of welfare states and dramatic changes in gender order which occur in modern societies have led to institutionalization of care practices and have provided

Introduction

a basis for jurisdictional claims of caring professions. Moreover, when the state supports medicalized approach to childbirth, the ability to achieve some extent of professional autonomy at micro-level is crucial for the development of the midwifery profession. This process can be facilitated or, on the contrary, obstructed by wider socio-political context. During the first decade of liberalization of Russian healthcare, midwives had better position for negotiations with doctors and hospital administration. Restoration of extensive state control over the reproductive health in mid 2000s has weakened midwives' standpoint and limited further development of midwifery autonomy.

In the fourth paper Barbara Sena and Alessandro Stievano outline that the nursing profession in Italy has undergone significant changes over the past 20 years, moving from a work characterized by tasks exclusively devoted to the care of a patient, to a health profession with skills, autonomy and specific responsibilities. The basic principle of nursing, which is to "take care" or "to care" of people in sickness and in health, seems to embed some forms of cure (forms of advanced care, drug therapy). This points to crossing old cultural models linked to the dominance of a single profession (medicine) and is favoured by the increase of technical and diagnostic capabilities, acquired either through new paths of university education, started in Italy with the reforms of 1990s, or with new programs of social and health integration. Today the activities of a nurse vary from performances that require high technical skills (as in the case of nurses working in surgery or intensive care or operating rooms) to activities where are required few technical skills but much more human and relational abilities (such as in geriatric or palliative care). Thirty years ago the nursing profession was perceived as a figure in charge of performing manual tasks specifically addressed to the assistance of sick people. Although this corresponded only partially to the true activities, in the eyes of patients, nurses professional identity consisted essentially

in this²⁶. The Second National Survey on Nursing by the Centre of Excellence for Nursing Scholarship Ipasvi showed a different picture and an evolution in a relational way of the epistemological core of the caring activities and of this identity. The most of respondents believes that the relational aspects are very important (74,4%). Then the relational dimension, which consists of interpretational, emotional and communicative skills with patients and caregivers, has become a prominent feature in the nursing field. Through this relationship, in fact, the nurses are able to pursue humanistic and emphatic objectives, while conveying their professional values. The role of nurses in contexts outside the hospital, as in the three main areas of the social-health integration: family health nursing, nursing homes and nursing home care, is beginning to grow, even if slowly, because this makes possible the development of alternative methods of care, consistent with the new health needs of the population (e.g. the increase of chronic degenerative diseases, related to population aging). Sena and Stievano conclude that in the current context the distinction between cure and care has not, perhaps, the same significance of some years ago. At that time, nurses demanded strongly the specificity of their care activities. Now, it is clearer that cure cannot exist without care and there are not so specific and clear distinctions anymore. This new and wide form of “care” is itself “cure” and vice versa.

In the fifth chapter Adia Harvey Wingfield considers how most of the research on gendered occupations fails to consider how also racial minority status affects working performance. Drawing from a larger research on the organizational changes in medicine for black professionals and from another study consisting of interviews with 17 black male nurses in USA, she examines the interplay between gender and race in shaping the ways that caring and curing are done in gendered occupations of nursing and medicine.

Introduction

The American scholar starts with reminding us that nursing and medicine are two clear examples of occupations that carry with them distinctive ideas about suitable workers, tasks, and responsibilities. The nursing profession is predominantly white and female, instead, even despite a recent influx of women into this field, medicine remains a predominantly white male profession. These differences extend to job expectations, where (mostly female) nurses are frequently tasked with and expected to be caring, nurturing, and deferential to doctors; while (mostly male) doctors are expected to cure and take on primary responsibility for many aspects of patient wellness²⁷.

Wingfield goes on to consider how race and gender work together to complicate these occupational expectations. Specifically, she examines how black men in nursing and medicine negotiate gendered job expectations that are attached to their occupations. Black men are in the minority in both fields due to race, but are in the gender majority in the medical profession. Though previous studies assert that gendering occupations privileges men in various occupations, additional research indicates that this gendering is a racialized process. That is, minority men often do not benefit from the unspoken gendered expectations, while these gendered norms are subtly racialized in ways that primarily advantage white men.

In previous studies of black men working as nurses, Wingfield has shown that in contrast to their white counterparts, these men rarely describe adopting or benefiting from traditional displays of masculinity. Black male nurses did not shun their female counterparts or the femininity associated with their profession. They also contended that, due to the gendered racism they encountered in nursing, they endorsed the femininity associated with nursing because it allowed them to access their caring side and prove that they really were capable, qualified, and good at nursing. They also reported that racial tensions made it difficult to perform masculinity by seeking close ties to (mostly male) doctors²⁸.

The findings of Wingfield's researches show that for black men in healthy professions, racial dynamics contextualize in many ways their experiences: from interactions with colleagues and patients, to motivations for working in health care, to understandings of their role in the medical field. It is within this racialized context that gender informs the ways that they engage in caring and curing.

Distancing and marginalization were frequent for black male nurses but not exclusive to them. Black male doctors also discussed ways they felt isolated from their coworkers. Unlike white men nurses who are routinely assumed to be doctors, it was not uncommon for patients to assume black men nurses filled lower status roles²⁹. This process occurred for black male doctors as well. Many noted that it was a common practice for patients to assume they were orderlies or that they were unqualified for their jobs.

The racial challenges that black men encountered in nursing, a predominantly white, gender-segregated occupation, meant that caring took on additional significance. It became a way to show their qualifications and fitness for the work and allowed them to behave in ways that were consistent with the occupational norms of the field. The racial dynamics present of being in the numerical minority, coupled with the fact that they worked in a culturally feminized occupation, meant that caring became an integral and important component of the ways that these men did the labor associated with their jobs.

In contrast, black men in medicine engaged in the process of *curing* by working to reduce racial health disparities. They did not highlight the importance and need for caring as a strategy towards proving occupational competence, because they saw a major part of their role in medicine as the ability to improve health outcomes so reducing health disparities for underserved and black populations.

Wingfield concludes that it is not just working in a gendered occupation, but the racial context of that experience that sets the stage for how labor is done by black professionals in the health sector.

Introduction

Moreover, her research has relevant implications for changes that are under way in the American health system. At the time nursing is experiencing a critical shortage due to a rapidly aging population and a declining number of workers trained to enter this profession, it might be beneficial to consider making nursing a more inclusive field for underrepresented minorities so that caring becomes simply part of the job rather than a strategy for demonstrating competence. Similarly, given their interest in curing as a way for reducing racial health disparities, black male doctors' priorities with regards to curing should be encouraged in and of itself rather than functioning as a coping mechanism in a somewhat hostile environment.

In the sixth chapter Guido Giarelli considers the need to reconnect care and cure in the specific conditions of Alzheimer's disease (AD), a widespread disease which affects 44 millions of people in the world and 4.1% of the people aged 65 or more in Italy³⁰. He begins with recalling two main ways the persons with AD are considered and their illness is treated³¹. The first is the dominant conventional biomedical approach which portrays sufferers as "lost" to disease, considered as a pathology of the brain, whose irreversible and upsetting effects are the depersonalization and the loss of self. In this frame dementia is considered as a syndrome, resulting from a number of underlying brain pathologies.

The second approach to AD and dementia is the psycho-social one, which questions the biomedical's portrayal of sufferer as a passive victim of a relentless deterioration of mental and physical capacities making the existence a "living death", i.e., a biologically alive but mentally and socially dead condition³². This opinion contends that, notwithstanding this deterioration, the sufferer is a *person*, even though a *different* one, whose selfhood has become elusive and ostensible. Understanding this different person requires, according to this approach, a subjective and social contextualization of the illness.

There is another version of the psycho-social approach, the symbolic interactionist analysis of the problem of the dementia sufferers'

social disconnectedness and interactional incapacity³³. On the basis of Goffman's dramaturgical theory³⁴, sufferers' increasing inability to honour societal conventions for ordinary interactions is considered in terms of their spoiled identities as the result of their failure to meet culturally and situationally defined ordinary expectations by others and of the discredit and stigma this attach to them.

The concept of "existential labour", Giarelli goes on, has been proposed to refer to the discursive work involved in articulating, realizing and managing the unique selfhood of dementia sufferers in an attempt to play down the potentially discrediting implications of their unconventional behaviours and implement restorative and socially inclusive actions³⁵.

Then Giarelli asks himself to what extent have contemporary health care systems taken into account the need outlined above of a strict interconnection between cure and care. And he answers that in the last decades, given the increasing concern for "chronic health conditions"³⁶, various more comprehensive approaches and models of intervention have emerged which call for raising "the gaze of health care from the disease to the person and the population"³⁷. Among those approaches, one of the most comprehensive is certainly the Chronic Care Model (CCM). It is grounded in the idea that care for people with chronic conditions requires not only ongoing medical knowledge and appropriate cure, but also time for physicians and other health professionals to have meaningful conversations with them and their caregivers. The CCM has been implemented in several countries; in Canada, in particular, an expanded version has been developed. If in the original CCM improved functional and clinical outcomes ideally resulted from interaction between teams and patients, in the expanded CCM improved health of population results from interactions and relationships among community members, healthcare professionals, organizations, individuals and community groups.

Introduction

On the basis of this expanded CCM, an experimental project among the University “Magna Graecia”, the Regional Center of Neurogenetics of Lamezia Terme and the Local Health Authority of Catanzaro has been carried on. The main aim was to pursue a proactive community approach to dementia and AD involving patients, caregivers and professionals in order to prevent and anticipate the development of the disease and of its complications by slowing its progression.

The conclusions regarding the results of the quality of life (QoL)-AD project are somehow paradoxical. Giarelli and his colleagues adopted this research tool to assess whether the set of integrated interventions of cure and care envisaged by the CCM could improve the QoL of the patients with AD. Instead, they found that the levels of self-rated QoL worsened significantly over time. The second paradoxical outcome has regarded the relatives caregivers: their evaluation of the QoL of their family member with AD improved quite significantly. On the whole, the most significant result appears the patient-caregiver disagreement regarding their evaluation of QoL. These outcomes seem to tell that AD is a biunique illness, affecting not only the sufferers, but also their family caregivers, in a sort of “cognitive dissonance” related to the different perception of the illness and of the ways it affects sufferer’s QoL. The need to reconcile this discrepancy between sufferer and caregiver is, according to Giarelli, one of the biggest challenge we face, if we believe that “caring for the incurable” is the only chance we have to accompany the persons suffering from AD in their inexorable decline into the unknown.

The reflection proposed by Palmieri and Speranza in the seventh chapter retraces the most important stages that have led surgeons to the affirmation of their “jurisdiction” and, therefore, of their own identity. The thinking of the two authors starts from the idea that *care* and *cure* have not always walked hand in hand and that the changing of the figure of the surgeon is doubly linked to the expansion of the dimension of *cure*. In pre-modern times medicine was, in fact, essentially *care* that,

imbued with Christian values, was capable of giving comfort and relief to people suffering, but far from ensuring the healing of the sick.

The sphere of the “care practices” was instead given to figures without specific training (such as barber-surgeons, apothecaries and phlebotomists), which occupied a socially inferior position to the doctors with a formal education. Subsequently, the *care* began to lose a little of its “religious connotations” and the *cure* started to strengthen its cognitive basis and its effectiveness: the observation and the “profanation” *cum ferro et igne* of the human body are progressively allowed, and ill and dead bodies become doctors’ main study material. In this changed perspective, the surgeons become essential: it is thanks to their manual skills that the interior of the bodies can be examined and the mechanisms that have led to injuries and diseases reconstructed with precision.

In the contemporary world, finally, thanks to the progressive refinement of the diagnostic and therapeutic tools, which have revolutionized the entire medical work, the scope of the surgery has also become the one wherein the results are more numerous, tangible and obvious. This has led to a consequent revaluation of surgeons not only in the medical arts but also in the social stratification with the surgeon becoming, thanks to the contribution given by cinema, television, literature and media, the most popular medical figure among people.

According to Palmieri and Speranza, therefore, the cure has received a significant boost from the surgical practices which make it possible to remove, replace and reconstruct with high precision parts of the human body and lead to the identification of the root causes of diseases. The space of *care*, on the other hand, is more restricted than in the past and generally associated with those skills and healthcare professionals (eg, clinicians and nurses) who interact face to face with the patients, taking care of their needs.

But what is the nature of the ties that link the various medical specialties to feel more or less close to *cure* or *care*? To answer this

Introduction

question, the authors use the results of a qualitative research carried out on clinical practitioners and surgeons that support the hypothesis that those who practice surgery are less caring of those who deal with clinical medicine.

In general, all the clinical practitioners interviewed believe that *care* is an important part of their medical practices and, indeed, the relationship with their patients is on top of their identification processes and it is markedly affected by the altruistic expectations most people identify doctors with. What surgeons are most interested in are the results of the scalpel, of the hand: they do not interact at all or they just interact in part with the patients (most of them are asleep during the operation); they do not take care of patients in a holistic way (as, almost by definition, they busy themselves with only a “part” of the patient care); their tasks are not flexible but extremely precise and limited. At the top of surgical practices and, therefore, of their identification process, there is, in fact, an emphasis on the operating room and its functioning based on action, speed, drama, strength and resistance³⁸.

In the final chapter Antonio Virzì et al. try to show that narrative medicine in psychiatry is a way to care and cure at the same time. They start to remark that psychiatry, in the last sixty years, has undergone a profound evolution characterized by definition of guidelines, development of new pharmacological therapies, new psychiatric rehabilitation programs and mental health institutions. Initially, without valid therapies, the only treatment was “taking care” of patients. Different instruments and theories, coming from sociology, philosophy, human science, have been gradually developed and adapted to psychiatry to better treat and understand patients needs.

In 1978 in Italy asylums were closed by the law 180 and mental health services were reorganized. Mental Hospitals, within General Hospitals, were created for acute patients, almost entirely treated with pharmacological therapies, and rehabilitation communities,

home treatment teams and social support completed the set of new mental health services. Therefore the difference between curing, more linked to pharmacological treatment, and caring, linked to various instruments and health services, becomes clearer. More recently narrative medicine has been identified as a versatile way to care and also to help psychiatrists to cure patients.

In fact, psychiatry, historically, has always been based on an interpretation of each patient's past and, therefore, has always paid attention to their histories and to their meaning, aiming at listening and the creation of a significant relationship, although this approach has gradually decreased with the development of the "neuroscientific" system. Narrative medicine is based on the patients' histories and it allows to look at the psychiatric disease from different points of view: the clinicians', the health care workers', the patients' and their relatives'.

Virzì et al. stress that in psychiatry the true revolution is that of substituting the traditional taking care of the patients with "giving them back" the capacity of taking care of themselves. On a closer inspection, this situation reminds the model "of *mutual participation*" in the typology of doctor-patient relationships developed by Szasz and Hollander and taken up by Freidson. "Obviously, some forms of psychotherapy fall here"³⁹. Moreover, the narrative paradigm assumes particular value in the approach to subjects with chronic diseases and disabilities, where the subject and his family take on full-time roles as leading and supporting actors in the treatment path. In such a respect, narrative medicine is not just a useful supplementary approach for better understanding the patients and their diseases, but it becomes an essential element both in diagnosis and cure.

The changing boundaries of caring and curing

After having reviewed all the contributions to this volume, what next? On one hand there is the conventional wisdom. Curing and

Introduction

caring are medical practices by definition but, historically, the two concepts have not always gone hand-in-hand. Often they have been considered as two mutually exclusive terms and therefore alternatively connected to different social actors. Nursing and medicine have been seen, and in many ways still are, as two classical examples of professions with opposite attitudes towards caring and curing. Or, to continue to consider the physicians, clinicians are traditionally more associated with caring and surgeons with curing. But profession and specialization are not the only variables involved in shaping caring and curing attitudes, other variables are concerned. Therefore, on the other side, this volume was meant to try to open a scenario as wide as possible and to consider how race, gender, projects of professionalization of old and new professions, even different kinds of sickness, social and political changes, national peculiarities (just to give an idea of the complexity of the variables involved) *work together to complicate* the unilateral occupational expectations. In order to see how it works let us pick up three variables starting with the national peculiarities.

As it concerns the early 1980s homebirth movement in Western countries, we are used to think that midwifery socially constructed an opposition between a male-doctor and a female-midwife, but this was not the case in the Soviet society where, as a result of devaluation of health care professionals, “feminization” of medical profession was very high (90% in obstetrics and gynecology, in early 1970s).

As for different kinds of sickness, a more comprehensive approach has emerged, grounded in the idea that care for people with chronic conditions requires not only appropriate medical expertise and cure, but also time for physicians and other health professionals to have caring conversations with them and their caregivers. This is rather clear in the appealing title (*Caring for the incurable*) of a chapter presented in this volume.

As for the projects of professionalization, it has been emphasized that nowadays the distinction between cure and care does not have, perhaps, the same significance of a few years ago, when nurses claimed the specificity of their care activities. Today, it is clearer that cure cannot exist without care and there are not so specific and clear cut distinctions anymore. Narrative medicine in psychiatry, for instance, is a way to care and cure at the same time. The boundaries between caring and curing are changing.

Lorenzo Speranza and Angela Palmieri⁴⁰

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Lorenzo Speranza and Angela Palmieri

Articoli/*Articles*

LA “CURA”: TRA DIMENSIONI TERAPEUTICHE, ESISTENZIALI ED EDUCATIVE

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SUMMARY

THERAPEUTIC, EXISTENTIAL AND EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF CARE

In Western culture, the concept of “care” is usually related to two main semantic domains: the idea of “curing”, mostly associated with medicine, and the idea of “taking care”, more frequently related to nursing and educational practices. The aim of this paper is to analyse the different meanings of “care”, including the existential dimensions of the caring process as well.

After a brief analysis of the changes concerning medical science over the last centuries, we will mainly focus on the transformations through which the clinical practice has gone, thanks to whom the concept of “taking care” of the patient has gained increasing attention.

The paper will finally underline the educational dimensions of the caring approach, intended as a patient’s global care. Indeed the aim of that approach is not only to promote a status of physical and psychological wellbeing, but also to support patients development through their personal growth and education.

La cura come dimensione fondante dell’esistenza umana: la cura esistenziale

Alle origini della cultura Occidentale, il concetto di “cura” rimandava a dimensioni che investivano globalmente l’esistenza dell’uomo: una

Key words: To cure - To care - Educational care - Medical care

delle favole di Igino (I sec. a.c.)¹ esprime in maniera molto chiara questa concezione. Proprio la ripresa di questa favola da parte del filosofo Martin Heidegger punta a comprendere e spiegare filosoficamente il significato della nostra esistenza sulla base del concetto di cura. Igino racconta che la Cura, attraversando un fiume, vide del fango e da questo costruì e plasmò l'uomo. Nacque poi una disputa sulla paternità dell'uomo tra Giove, che vi aveva infuso lo spirito, e la Terra, che aveva fornito la materia prima. Elessero, quindi, come giudice, Saturno, il Tempo, che risolse in questo modo la disputa: lo spirito dell'uomo, alla sua morte, fu assegnato a Giove, e il suo corpo alla Terra.

Ma poiché fu la Cura che per prima diede forma a questo essere, fin che esso vive lo possiede la Cura².

In questo senso, riprendendo quanto espresso dalla favola, Heidegger presenta un aspetto estremamente significativo della cura: essa non è solo un modo di agire e interagire tra gli uomini, bensì è caratteristica strutturale e fondante dell'esistenza stessa.

Proprio la cura è quell'aspetto che ha dato forma e ragion d'essere a uno sostanza informe, creando per questa creatura la possibilità di esistere, di collocarsi nel mondo e verso il futuro. Senza l'aspetto della Cura, quindi, l'essere umano rimarrebbe ancorato o ad aspetti materiali (la Terra) o spirituali (lo spirito di Giove) senza la possibilità di unificare e armonizzare queste componenti in un progetto vivente. Riprendendo Heidegger, scrive a proposito Cristina Palmieri:

L'esistenza è fatta di corpo e spirito, di materia e di qualcosa che vivifica questa materia [...]. Ciò che distingue l'essere umano dagli altri esseri è proprio questa stretta e strutturale relazione tra la propria effettività (il proprio corpo), ovvero la propria materia, ciò che è già dato [...] e la propria possibilità, quell'apertura al possibile che è intrinseca nel divenire dell'essere umano³.

La rilettura di Heidegger intorno alla favola di Igino consente di evidenziare come la cura, fondante l'esistenza umana, si giochi in un basilare rapporto tra effettività e possibilità, dal cui intreccio scaturisce per l'uomo il suo “più proprio poter essere”, quella singolare modalità esistenziale che si attua in una forma vivente secondo le sue proprie possibilità:

L'uomo non ha semplicemente delle possibilità, ma è possibilità⁴.

Queste possibilità possono portarlo a diventare ciò che può essere a partire da sé, dalla sua effettività, già definita, che costituisce per ognuno il proprio limite.

La cura, dunque, è sia struttura dell'esistenza del singolo, intreccian- do effettività e possibilità in modo concreto ma in evoluzione, sia struttura dell'esistenza di altri⁵, in modo che sostenga o possa sostenerne il percorso di formazione tra possibilità ed effettività:

Curare, nel senso di “preoccuparsi di”, [...] vuol dire lavorare sul mas- simo sviluppo possibile della progettualità nelle condizioni date⁶.

Le modalità attraverso cui questa cura esistenziale può tradursi in pratiche agite verso se stessi, verso gli altri e il mondo possono assumere tratti e caratteristiche differenti, andando a configurarsi come una serie di azioni congruenti con l'apertura di possibilità e progettualità⁷, oppure come atti rivolti verso un soggetto “passivo”, mero ricevente di quanto agito da altri: si può aver cura in modo che i soggetti imparino a riconoscere e costruire le loro proprie ed uniche possibilità, oppure si può curare sostituendosi all'altro nella sua capacità di cura, di scelta, del divenire stesso.

Quell'azione di cura progettata e messa in atto per rendere i soggetti capaci di riconoscere le proprie possibilità, può essere denominata come “autentica”⁸, “nella misura in cui produce individuazione e au- tenticità”⁹. Curare, invece, partendo da una prospettiva di dominio

e imprigionamento dell’altro, “ingenera meccanismi di dipendenza e dispersione di sé”¹⁰: in questo caso, la cura può essere definita inautentica, in quanto non consente lo sviluppo di possibilità e progettualità nell’altro. La distinzione tra cura autentica e inautentica consente di introdurre alcune riflessioni circa il concetto di “cura” nella disciplina pedagogica e in quella medica, entrambe centrate sulla progettazione e la realizzazione del “curare”, tuttavia secondo modelli e paradigmi di riferimento differenti.

All’interno dell’orizzonte pedagogico, si agisce cura qualora questa pratica consente ai soggetti cui è rivolta di generare cambiamenti a partire dalle condizioni e dalle situazioni date in cui ognuno di essi si trova:

*La cura è educazione. E quindi la relazione attraverso cui essa si manifesta è educativa, nel momento in cui è quel necessario occuparsi degli altri in cui si apre il loro campo di possibilità*¹¹.

Perché questo avvenga, come si noterà più specificamente in seguito, devono essere messi in atto pensieri progettuali e, successivamente, azioni pratiche particolari. Molto spesso, invece, la tendenza è quella di realizzare azioni ed espressioni di “sostituzione” in relazione agli altri di cui ci si sta prendendo cura, senza lasciare loro possibilità di sperimentazione, desiderio, emozione, cambiamento. Questo generalmente non accade per scarso interesse verso i soggetti che si stanno, appunto, curando, ma, spesso, per una frenesia di sollecitudine nei loro confronti che impedisce però loro di riconoscere, sperimentare e potenziare le loro possibilità.

Una tale accezione di cura, vicina al campo dell’inautenticità, per come l’abbiamo definita, pare agire in ambito sanitario, qualora il riferimento sia a un modello di tipo biomedico, affermatosi in tale ambito nel mondo occidentale a partire da metà 800. Esso è costruito, infatti, su una concezione della cura che può essere messa in atto se il paziente viene configurato come una “mancanza”, in questo caso

di salute, che può essere sanata dalla sola competenza scientifica e tecnica del medico. In questo senso, per esser curato, il paziente deve agire una “passività” che può soltanto attendere fiduciosa le azioni e le decisioni terapeutiche del medico:

Elementi di “inautenticità” nella cura (nelle forme dell’assistere, del prevenire e del sostituire l’altro) sono inevitabili nella misura in cui l’altro è “mancante” nelle diverse forme in cui può esserlo (piccolo, fragile, indigente, malato, disorientato etc.)¹².

Come si è notato, inoltre, per agire una cura autentica è necessario riferirsi a un modello di riferimento che consideri la centralità della relazione tra i soggetti coinvolti, senza relegare il destinatario della cura a una posizione passiva e impotente. Una tale concezione non è l’unica presente all’interno della cultura occidentale che, come si vedrà tra breve, si è costruita fortemente intorno ad altre accezioni e declinazioni del concetto di “cura”.

Cura, clinica, terapia: diverse accezioni della cura nella cultura occidentale

Come è noto, il termine “cura” si è costruito, nella cultura Occidentale, intorno a due particolari concezioni: una è quella sviluppatasi nel campo medico, col significato di terapia, trattamento, guarigione, mentre l’altra, più vicina a quelle caratteristiche esistenziali della cura appena delineate, si riferisce all’attenzione e all’interesse per l’altro.

In particolare, per evidenziare le diverse declinazioni della cura, risulta significativo esplorare i differenti atteggiamenti “clinici” assunti dalla scienza medica occidentale nel corso dei secoli, esemplificativi di diverse accezioni della cura.

Il termine “clinico” (dal sostantivo greco *klinè*, letto, e dal corrispondente verbo *klinèin*, chinarsi) indica originariamente il tipico gesto del medico di chinarsi sul letto del malato per visitarlo e instaurare la relazione terapeutica con lui. In questo rapporto

clinico, si costruisce una peculiare conoscenza, che richiede sia una conoscenza e una tecnica, sia la capacità del medico di creare un rapporto umano. Questo particolare processo di costruzione della relazione clinica si è articolato in modi differenti nel corso della storia, allineandosi ai progressivi mutamenti della disciplina medica. Esemplificativa, per comprendere l’evoluzione della concezione dei concetti di “clinica”, “cura” e “terapia”, risulta essere l’opera di Michel Foucault, *La nascita della clinica*, in cui viene proposta la formazione dello sguardo medico nella scienza occidentale. Partita dalla medicina ippocratica¹³, centrata su una relazione clinica focalizzata su un’etica di cura globale della persona¹⁴, Foucault mostra quanto la pratica medica occidentale si sia via via costruita su uno sguardo finalizzato a scomporre il corpo per ricercare la malattia. In questo senso, la relazione terapeutica orientata a curare la persona, si è spostata, nel corso dei secoli, verso l’attenzione alla cura della malattia, dell’organo malato. Il riferimento principale di Foucault a questo riguardo è quello a François Broussais, che intorno al 1820, introdusse il concetto di malattia, in sostituzione del corpo malato, come oggetto della scienza medica. Questo cambiamento sottintendeva anche una rinnovata concezione della morte dell’uomo: attraverso lo studio del cadavere, infatti, la morte diventava positivo fondamento per costruire ulteriore sapere. In questo senso, oltre a rivelare la concreta finitudine dell’uomo, il corpo-cadavere apriva nuove possibilità conoscitive:

La struttura antropologica che appare allora svolge insieme il ruolo critico di limite e il ruolo fondatore di origine¹⁵.

Il corpo-cadavere, simbolo visibile della morte e della finitudine umana, risulta la fonte di conoscenza su cui si è costruita la medicina clinica nella cultura occidentale:

Resterà senza dubbio decisivo per la nostra cultura che il primo discorso tenuto sull’individuo abbia dovuto passare attraverso questo momento della morte. Questo perché l’uomo occidentale non ha potuto costituirsi ai propri occhi come oggetto di scienza [...]che in riferimento alla propria distruzione [...]; dalla integrazione della morte nel pensiero medico è nata una medicina che si dà come scienza dell’individuale¹⁶.

Attraverso l’analisi del cadavere, lo sguardo medico occidentale è stato fortemente orientato una centratura sulla ricerca della malattia, della patologia, anche grazie al progressivo sviluppo di tecnologie, sempre più precise e potenti, che hanno permesso una ricerca accuratissima all’interno del corpo¹⁷. Il focus dello sguardo medico, dunque, è stato sicuramente orientato allo studio, all’analisi e alla cura della malattia rinvenuta nel corpo del paziente. Nell’esercizio di questo agire terapeutico, l’attenzione per la parte tecnica e scientifica può non necessariamente disgiungersi dal gesto relazionale del medico che si mette in rapporto con la persona intera.

In questo senso, nella cultura occidentale, un tale orientamento e una tale costruzione dello sguardo medico hanno aperto una maggiore possibilità alla scissione della parte della cura che si occupa della malattia e della sua guarigione, dalla cura intesa come “prendersi cura” globale (*to care*) della persona nella sua interezza¹⁸.

A queste due articolazioni del concetto di cura è stato attribuito un diverso valore nel corso dei secoli; la cura terapeutica, orientata a guarire e basata sul forte statuto della cultura professionale medica, gode di un forte valore sociale. Invece, alla cura intesa come “prendersi cura”, far crescere, accompagnare, formare e sviluppare possibilità esistenziali, è riferito un valore sociale molto debole, basato sul legame tra questo tipo di cura e il lavoro domestico e familiare, di accudimento materno, che ne rappresenta l’origine¹⁹. La cultura occidentale ha, dunque, costruito la sua idea di “cura” proprio sulla base di questa divisione semantica tra le due accezioni, attribuendo

un riconoscimento sociale, economico, politico maggiore alla cura terapeutica e posizionando invece il “prendersi cura” a margine della considerazione sociale.

La significatività e l’importanza del “prendersi cura” sono però molto più ampie e profonde rispetto a una tale marginalizzazione, costruita intorno all’accostamento con la cura familiare:

Il prendersi cura è un processo complesso ed è riduttivo considerare che si appiattisca unicamente sull’aspetto relazionale²⁰.

Pensare la cura come “to care”, avvicina il pensiero alle dimensioni educative della cura, che verranno maggiormente approfondite in un successivo passaggio. La cura educativa, infatti, è sostanzialmente l’agire rivolto allo sviluppo di progettualità esistenziali, un autentico interesse dell’uomo verso lo sviluppo di un altro uomo. Giuseppe Annacontini, nel suo testo *Lo sguardo e la parola*, propone una riflessione centrata sul concetto di cura, per istituire un confronto teorico tra le discipline mediche e quelle pedagogiche: è proprio la cura, infatti, secondo l’autore, ad aprire la possibilità di un incontro tra questi due saperi.

Contemplare la possibilità di una cura non solo focalizzata sulla malattia, consente di connotare anche l’incontro tra un medico e un paziente con aspetti formativi ed educativi:

La cura, allora, diventa formazione quando, abbandonata la sua essenza puramente medico-normativa, diventa “luogo” di incontro, di riflessione, di riprogettazione. Luogo in cui, ancora una volta, si incontrano medicina e pedagogia²¹.

Appare evidente come, intorno al concetto di cura, possano essere sviluppate importanti riflessioni per andare ad esplorare ed evidenziare le interconnessioni tra la cura medico-sanitaria e la cura educativa:

La “cura”: tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative

Assistere significa intrinsecamente sviluppare le possibilità dell’altro e quindi in qualche modo “formarlo”, come educare significa inevitabilmente “aver cura” del poter essere dell’altro nella dimensione materiale della vita, nel suo “essere-nel-mondo” e quindi, per certi versi, anche assisterlo²².

Queste dimensioni evidenziano la possibilità e, a nostro parere, anche la necessità, dell’incontro e dell’intreccio tra il modello di cura della medicina e quello della cura educativa, come si andrà a evidenziare nel proseguimento dello scritto.

La cura nel mestiere di medico

Perché abbia inizio la relazione terapeutica con un medico, il paziente, sulla base di un sintomo, di una situazione fisica che lo disturba, chiede al medico di aiutarlo. Questo incontro, dunque, si struttura tradizionalmente come asimmetrico, intendendo l’asimmetria come la presenza delle caratteristiche utili per la risoluzione del problema solamente nella figura del medico:

*Al ruolo del medico competono conoscenze tecniche, specifica formazione.
 [...] Per il proprio status il malato è invece legittimato a presentare incompetenza tecnica, debolezza e bisogno di aiuto²³.*

Il “qualcosa” che disturba il paziente viene portato inizialmente come un racconto attraverso il quale il malato narra la storia del suo sintomo, della sua malattia, inserendo in essa i suoi vissuti, i suoi pensieri. Sulla base di questa storia, il medico generalmente visita e osserva direttamente il corpo del malato, iniziando a “tradurre” il racconto in una storia clinica. La costruzione della storia clinica si attua anche attraverso l’anamnesi, termine che proviene dal verbo greco ἀναμιμνήσκω (anamimnēsko), cioè “ricordare”: l’anamnesi medica, dunque, viene raccolta attraverso il ricordo e il recupero della storia individuale e familiare, in relazione alla patologia in oggetto.

Questo momento di raccolta della storia del paziente è la prima fondamentale occasione attraverso la quale il medico può cercare di conoscere, oltre a sintomi e segni fisici, anche il vissuto e il pensiero del suo paziente²⁴. Scrive a riguardo Annacontini:

Un approccio anamnestico che vada oltre la raccolta di dati oggettivi per rivalutare l'orizzonte storico-culturale – le storie di vita – della persona malata è, dunque, una fase essenziale per realizzare un rapporto, tra medico e paziente, individualizzato e orientato a facilitare il “compito educativo” della professionalità medica²⁵.

Successivamente, il processo di cura messo in atto dal medico si struttura con la formulazione di una diagnosi, ossia il ricondurre i sintomi portati a uno specifico quadro nosografico, attraverso un processo ipotetico-deduttivo. Sulla base di questa diagnosi, il medico procederà a comprendere come eliminare la malattia e riportare equilibrio nel corpo del paziente (compito terapeutico).

All'interno di questo momento iniziale di costruzione della relazione di cura, risultano dunque importanti differenti competenze che il medico deve esercitare. Innanzitutto, infatti, la diagnosi delle malattie è un “esercizio razionale” con cui il medico cerca di ricondurre segni e sintomi a “quadri noti”, in modo coerente alle caratteristiche di una certa malattia (deduzione). Il medico ricerca poi ulteriori elementi per verificare le ipotesi formulate (verifica). Come abbiamo sostenuto altrove, il processo diagnostico risulta essere così costituito:

Esso consiste, a partire della raccolta della storia di malattia (anamnesi) e dalla visita del paziente (esame obiettivo) nell'ipotizzare il collegamento tra determinati sintomi, ossia gli aspetti di espressione soggettiva della malattia (es. il dolore) e segni, ossia gli aspetti di espressione oggettiva della malattia, in quanto tali misurabili (es. un'eventuale ipertensione), a un determinato quadro sindromico per poi andare a dedurre altri sintomi e segni - da verificare con gli opportuni test diagnostici - che dovrebbero essere presenti, anche se non ancora nominati/rilevati, nella storia clinica del paziente²⁶.

Oltre a queste capacità, però, come già accennato, per impostare l'inizio della relazione di cura con un paziente, il medico può fare riferimento anche alla dimensione esperienziale e soggettiva nel ragionamento medico, oltre a forme di pensiero narrativo che gli permettono di cogliere vissuti, pensieri, sentimenti presenti nella storia di quel particolare e unico paziente. Come abbiamo evidenziato altrove²⁷, la capacità diagnostica di un medico si basa anche su una competenza per certi versi creativa, intesa come pensiero abduttivo, in grado di produrre conoscenza per certi versi su uno specifico e unico paziente, all'interno del sapere medico. Sulla base delle categorie scientifiche della medicina, infatti, ogni medico dovrebbe sempre considerare le dimensioni individuali sia nel momento diagnostico, sia in quello di scelta della terapia: l'individualità del malato, infatti, non è mai del tutto inseribile in categorie predeterminate che, seppur essenziali per una efficace pratica, non esauriscono la complessità e la peculiarità di ogni paziente.

Per poter, quindi, agire cura verso questa complessità che caratterizza l'essere umano, appare con sempre maggior chiarezza la necessità che alla competenza biologica e scientifica del medico, centrata appunto sulla capacità diagnostica e la conseguente scelta terapeutica, si affianchi un'azione clinica, intesa secondo il significato originario del termine, precedentemente ricordato, che sappia chinarsi su ogni singolo paziente e sulla sua storia, al cui interno si colloca anche l'esperienza di malattia²⁸.

Per meglio esemplificare questo concetto, si può notare come, sul piano scientifico, la medicina si presenti come una disciplina completamente centrata sull'analisi e il trattamento di fenomeni biologici, ma, come scriveva Edoardo Parma, quando

è calata sul piano applicativo, essa si trova nella necessità di utilizzare paradigmi caratteristici delle scienze umane e storiche, in base ai quali può essere in grado di integrare tutte le prospettive biologiche, psicologiche e sociali che si manifestano nel corso della consultazione per poter gestire al meglio gli irripetibili incontri medico-paziente²⁹.

Sembrerebbe dunque necessario che, per agire cura, il medico debba sapere intrecciare processi cognitivi ed emotivi³⁰ per costruire una relazione terapeutica non solo centrata sulla malattia, ma in cui anche il paziente possa avere un ruolo attivo nel processo terapeutico, secondo le caratteristiche della cura autentica in precedenza trattate³¹. In questo senso, sebbene lo sviluppo della medicina nella cultura occidentale, come si è notato, si sia fortemente focalizzata sulla cura della malattia piuttosto che su una cura globale del malato, appare oggi sempre più evidentemente come l'incontro col paziente, con il suo racconto di malattia, con il suo vissuto e le dimensioni sociali e relazionali della sua esperienza, siano dimensioni altrettanto importanti per una buona cura medica, capace di comprendere la storia e il vissuto del paziente. Va in questa direzione, ci pare, l'attenzione alle cosiddette *Medical Humanities* nel percorso per formare la capacità di cura del medico, intendendole come strumenti utili ad

andare in profondità nell'analisi dell'esperienza di malattia, insegnando prima a osservare con attenzione il paziente e poi a scavare ben al di sotto della superficie del fenomeno patologico e dei segni e sintomi medici col quale esso si presenta³².

A questo riguardo, la pedagogia e la cura educativa da essa proposta, possono portare un particolare contributo all'azione del medico in relazione alle competenze ermeneutiche e significanti³³, come si vedrà più specificamente in seguito.

Questi aspetti risultano particolarmente rilevanti per quei medici impegnati in azioni che prendono in cura i pazienti per periodi lunghi e continuativi, andando dunque ad agire sulle malattie che segnano l'esistenza e la vita quotidiana delle persone. Si pensa, ad esempio, irreversibilmente ai pediatri di famiglia, che hanno un ruolo importante nell'accompagnamento alla crescita non solo dei piccoli pazienti, ma anche dei loro adulti di riferimento; allo stesso modo, i medici di famiglia sono chiamati alla costruzione di una relazione

terapeutica che segue e accompagna la storia dei pazienti nel corso della vita adulta. La capacità del medico di costruire l'incontro coi malati, infatti, aprirà la possibilità per inserire la comprensione delle malattie che di volta in volta porteranno all'interno della storia esistenziale, oltreché clinica, di quel particolare soggetto³⁴.

Infatti, a ogni incontro con un malato, il medico entra necessariamente in contatto anche con la sua storia, che viene interrogata e trasformata nelle informazioni utili per riconoscere e curare la patologia. Come già considerato, il lavoro diagnostico basato sulla storia del paziente impegna il medico in un'azione ermeneutica, in cui questa storia viene usata come un “testo” su cui agire un'attività interpretativa³⁵.

Una cura del medico agita secondo questi aspetti, quindi, non si costruisce solo su aspetti fisici e modelli di analisi biomedici, ma si riferisce a una disposizione all'ascolto di ogni malato e della particolare storia che quest'ultimo porta. La cura del sintomo fisico si accompagna, quindi, a una comprensione olistica del paziente, collegando la storia di malattia all'interno di una storia esistenziale più ampia.

Il modello di cura che si crea, dunque, si allarga notevolmente rispetto al modello rigidamente asimmetrico in cui il ruolo del paziente si esaurisce nel portare un sintomo e nell'agire una sostanziale passività in attesa delle decisioni e delle scelte comunicate dal medico.

Una cura medica, qualora consideri fondamentale la storia del paziente e quanto da esso portato in relazione ad aspettative, pensieri e vissuti, impone una relazione terapeutica pensata come un processo, in cui parte importante è agita dal malato stesso, attivo e principale costruttore della sua salute all'interno della sua storia, grazie anche all'intervento esperto suggerito dal medico³⁶.

In questo senso, nella cura del medico, così pensata, si possono ritrovare le caratteristiche della cura autentica, precedentemente descritte, oltre ad alcuni elementi riconducibili alla cura educativa, per come la si andrà a descrivere tra breve.

La cura educativa

L’educazione è un aspetto che da sempre ha costituito la componente sociale e culturale dell’essere umano e la discussione su essa continua ad essere legata a elementi politici, storici, economici e scientifici. Proporre una definizione unica e univoca di cosa possa essere inteso come “educazione” risulta impresa ardita e certamente non affrontabile in questa sede³⁷.

Scopo delle righe che seguono è infatti quello di andare a porre l’attenzione sull’accostamento del termine “cura” all’aggettivo “educativa”, per comprendere che cosa significa e che cosa si intende con l’espressione di “cura educativa”.

Avendo già definito il concetto di cura come struttura fondante dell’esistenza umana, è possibile notare ora che l’educazione, intendendo questa azione come aprire allo sviluppo di possibilità formative, di cambiamento, è fortemente radicata nelle dimensioni esistenziali dell’esperienza umana. È possibile, quindi, notare in primo luogo come la cura educativa abbia origine nel concetto di cura esistenziale trattato in precedenza relativamente alla favola di Igino, ripresa dalla filosofia di Heidegger; ancor più precisamente, si può sottolineare che, per progettare e agire una cura specificamente educativa, sia necessario riferirsi a una cura pensata come fondante per l’esistenza stessa dell’uomo.

Declinandola, dunque, in senso educativo, la cura esistenziale può essere intesa come la ricerca dell’uomo per la sua propria “forma”, tra la sua azione personale, la sua libertà e gli interventi educativi di altri, necessari a qualsiasi soggetto per costruire una sua propria “forma”:

Da un lato l’uomo non è, non si costituisce come tale, non diventa uomo senza che qualcuno si prenda cura di lui, interagisca con lui, abbia volontà e intenzionalità di formarlo e di educarlo [...] Per molti versi e in molti sensi è vero che, pur dipendendo totalmente da un Altro che si prenda cura di lui educativamente, quell’essere neotenico che è l’uomo si può tuttavia

La “cura”: tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative

considerare artefice e protagonista del suo processo di formazione in quanto dipende da lui non solo il tenere o non tenere conto dell'informazione ma anche l'interpretare i messaggi [...], il vivere il suo processo di formazione³⁸.

La cura, dunque, è educazione quando è agire orientato a portare l'altro alla scoperta delle sue caratteristiche e potenzialità, cioè le “basi” a partire dalle quali costruire la propria forma³⁹; in questi termini, la cura educativa è tale quando disvela possibilità di significazione per ogni uomo, con un attento interesse alle storie di vita in costruzione:

Se si classifica la situazione all'interno di un “già dato”, non si riesce a favorire l'apertura al “possibile ancora”. Questa esigenza di senso è l'apertura al progetto di sé⁴⁰.

Va notato come, per portare ad assumere una propria forma, la cura educativa deve saper riconoscere, in certe situazioni e in certi momenti, che sia necessario indicare chiaramente una direzione e operare un contenimento,

consentendo all'altro, in condizioni di totale mancanza di autonomia o di necessaria dipendenza, di sopravvivere e quindi di sentire di “poter essere”⁴¹.

Quanto fin qui scritto consente di evidenziare come agire una cura educativa presupponga inevitabilmente una situazione relazionale. Per tematizzare, però, cosa si intenda con il concetto di cura educativa, è necessario soffermarsi sulle caratteristiche di questa componente relazionale che la abita. Cura educativa, infatti, non si esaurisce solamente sul piano della relazione. Una particolare capacità empatica e relazionale, infatti, non è sufficiente per agire una cura propriamente educativa, in quanto quest'ultima si costruisce sulla base di dimensioni concrete e progettate, che passano attraverso l'agire e non soltanto attraverso la relazione⁴².

Dunque, una cura educativa non dovrebbe essere definita sulla base dell’essere in relazione ma, al contrario, è proprio la cura educativa che, per essere agita, deve proporre una relazione con determinate caratteristiche:

Forse non è tanto la relazione a definire l’educativo, ma l’educativo a indicare la specificità di una particolare relazione⁴³.

In questo senso, dunque, la cura educativa è contraddistinta da quella peculiare relazione volta al cambiamento, allo sviluppo di possibilità e potenzialità dei soggetti a cui si rivolge, senza essere l’unico elemento a costituirne la natura educativa:

L’educazione sembra non essere riducibile alla relazione, ma consistere in un determinato “campo di esperienza”, di cui la relazione è parte⁴⁴.

Seguendo questa prospettiva, quindi, la cura educativa andrà anche nella direzione di costruire, progettare e realizzare occasioni di esperienza in cui possano avvenire azioni educative. Ogni azione di cura educativa, infatti, avviene in un contesto, basato e costruito sulle logiche di quello che Riccardo Massa⁴⁵ chiama “dispositivo pedagogico”, intendendolo come il contesto che

presidia l’organizzazione dei tempi, degli spazi, della dimensione prosseguistica, della collocazione e della gestione dei corpi degli educatori e degli educandi, delle relazioni, delle attività, dei metodi e delle tecniche, dei mezzi e degli strumenti, dei simboli⁴⁶.

Il dispositivo in atto manifesta una certa idea di cura, rendendo così pensabili e agibili certe pratiche, certe azioni per mettere in atto la cura. Proprio sulla base di questo dispositivo verranno progettate e agite le dimensioni pragmatiche con cui la cura educativa viene realizzata. Questi aspetti, attraverso la cui progettazione e azione la cura educativa si manifesta, si possono evidenziare in quattro piani, intrecciati e

La “cura”: tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative

irriducibili l’uno all’altro⁴⁷: la dimensione pragmatica e materiale di uno spazio specifico, progettato e pensato; la concezione del tempo; la dimensione corporea e, infine, la sfera emotiva e relazionale.

Sulla base di quanto scritto, dunque, il lettore può aver compreso le caratteristiche fondamentali e strutturanti del concetto di “cura educativa”. È a questo punto possibile avviare la trattazione verso la sua parte conclusiva, andando a intravedere l’intreccio tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative che consente di avvicinare medicina e pedagogia, proprio intorno alla “cura”⁴⁸.

Tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative: l’intreccio tra medicina e pedagogia intorno al concetto di “cura”

Avvicinandosi alla conclusione dello scritto, e sulla base di quanto finora trattato, si tiene a far intravedere al lettore un possibile intreccio tra la disciplina medica e quella pedagogica, proprio intorno al concetto di cura e alle dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative in esso presenti.

Innanzitutto, l’azione di cura messa in atto da medicina e pedagogia è una caratteristica fondante e caratterizzante l’esperienza umana. In ogni tempo, in ogni società ritroviamo la cura educativa, in quanto intimamente connessa ai rapporti che gli uomini instaurano tra loro: una delle caratteristiche che distingue l’uomo dagli altri esseri viventi è, infatti, quella di riuscire a trasmettere alle generazioni successive un patrimonio culturale, oltreché genetico, costituito da tradizioni, valori, credenze, sistemi di pensiero e comprensione della realtà, tramandato anche attraverso l’azione di cura volta a educare le generazioni più giovani.

Anche la medicina ha origini remotissime, perché da sempre l’uomo ha cercato, con gli strumenti a sua disposizione, di curare le malattie che lo affliggevano. Evolvendo nel corso dei secoli, anche la cura agita dalla medicina ha sempre accompagnato l’uomo nel tentativo di conoscere, curare e prevenire la malattia.

M. Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini, Lucia Zannini

Le dimensioni esistenziali della cura educativa, volte a formare l'esistenza stessa dell'uomo, e gli aspetti terapeutici della cura medica, orientate ad eliminare la sofferenza fisica dal corpo, hanno da sempre abitato la storia umana.

Oltre ad esercitare entrambe azioni di cura fondanti per l'essere umano, va notato che medicina e pedagogia hanno un oggetto di indagine comune, intorno al quale agire, appunto, la loro cura. La medicina e la pedagogia, con le relative e peculiari strutture epistemologiche, hanno in comune questo campo d'indagine: l'uomo, le sue relazioni, i suoi progetti; una si occupa in maniera specifica del suo aspetto fisico, cercando di eliminare dal corpo la malattia per mantenerne la salute, l'altra si concentra sul suo aspetto formativo. Entrambe, pur nella loro diversità, necessitano uno sguardo inter-disciplinare per poter agire una cura autentica nei confronti dei soggetti ai quali si rivolgono. La diagnosi medica di determinati soggetti, ad esempio, si trova strettamente intrecciata in molteplici servizi sanitari, sociali, socio-educativi, col lavoro dei professionisti dell'educazione. Tale diagnosi, frutto di un'azione specifica della cura medica, costituisce un punto di partenza sul quale impostare un lavoro di collaborazione interdisciplinare tra professionisti della sanità e professionisti dell'educazione qualora, grazie alla presenza di una diagnosi medica, le loro attività professionali si trovino intrecciate:

Sarebbe tuttavia a nostro avviso inopportuno stendere un progetto educativo senza considerare il deficit e la disabilità di cui un utente è portatore, se non altro perché noi tutti non solo abbiamo un corpo, ma siamo il nostro corpo⁴⁹.

La considerazione della dimensione corporale e delle condizioni fisiche, di sviluppo in cui questo si trova, risulta, dunque, importante da considerare per la progettazione di una cura educativa autentica, che possa prospettare possibilità esistenziali adeguate alle condizioni date del soggetto. Allo stesso tempo, anche la cura agita dal

La “cura”: tra dimensioni terapeutiche, esistenziali ed educative

professionista della medicina necessita di considerare non solo le componenti fisiche e patologiche da cui è affetto il corpo, per poter costruire una relazione di cura globale col paziente:

La diagnosi in medicina, per essere una pratica di qualità deve avere anche una componente fortemente relazionale ed educativa (ossia di comprensione del paziente), come, per converso, il lavoro educativo assume, spesso inconsapevolmente, modalità e strategie di intervento che appartengono anche ad alcuni campi della medicina particolarmente avanzati (ad esempio, gli ultimi sviluppi della medicina generale o di alcune discipline riabilitative, come la terapia occupazionale)⁵⁰.

L’interessamento per ciascuna individualità (sia soggetto di educazione, sia paziente) deve essere la preoccupazione principale delle due discipline, quando rimangono fedeli al loro orientamento di fondo e al loro spirito originario.

L’uomo è il referente principale sia della scienza pedagogica sia della scienza medica anche se questo non vuole significare che esse debbano ignorare o sottovalutare le problematiche culturali, sociali, economiche e politiche che ne condizionano, positivamente o negativamente, l’esistenza e di conseguenza anche l’ambito del suo sapere e il suo stesso vissuto del dolore⁵¹.

Inoltre, sia la cura medica, sia quella educativa, essendo focalizzate sull’uomo, basano gran parte della loro azione sulla creazione di un rapporto tra persone, costruendo, con finalità e specificità diverse, due situazioni in cui è necessario fare riferimento a una soggettività e dunque a metodologie in qualche modo individualizzate, che prendano in esame le dimensioni esistenziali e personali:

Ciò significa sostenere che tanto per la medicina quanto per la pedagogia la preoccupazione principale consiste nello studio e nell’interessamento per ciascuna singola individualità (paziente o educando che sia) [...]. Il necessario ricorso ad una metodologia individualizzata richiama le necessità per entrambe le scienze di far riferimento alla (e quindi rispettare la) soggettività degli individui con cui hanno a che fare⁵².

In conclusione, riferendosi ai possibili punti di incontro che si sono brevemente accennati, è possibile intravedere alcuni nessi tra la cura medica e quella pedagogica nella loro pratica. Annacontini, nel testo *Dalla mano al pensiero*, analizza la possibilità di costruire un intreccio tra le discipline mediche e pedagogiche, in vista di una cura globale della persona. Scrive a proposito l'autore:

Il senso comune attribuisce, all'uno - il sapere medico - l'attributo dell'esattezza, all'altro - il sapere pedagogico - la qualità interpretativa; all'uno, l'intento nomotetico, all'altro l'idiografico e così via. Nel mentre scriviamo già sappiamo dell'impossibilità di tale differente, rigida imputazione; già sappiamo della necessità scientifica e pratico-operativa di integrare e coniugare le diverse istanze e caratteristiche di tali domini. Articolazione possibile a partire dalla centralità indiscussa che per entrambi ha la cura per la persona⁵³.

Le riflessioni intorno alle dimensioni esistenziali, terapeutiche ed educative del concetto di cura permettono di evidenziare le loro reciproca interrelazione anche nel campo di esperienza della cura medica, tradizionalmente improntata intorno al concetto di “terapia”. In questo senso, il riconoscimento di tutte queste molteplici componenti evidenzia l'attenzione e la delicatezza necessarie per considerarle e metterle in atto in vista di un'azione di cura globale. Quanto notato, quindi, in relazione all'ipotesi di nessi tra la cura medica e la cura pedagogica, apre la possibilità per pensare a un intreccio tra modelli epistemologici differenti di cura e di pratiche agite, proprio con l'intenzione di tematizzare e realizzare una cura globale, anche grazie all'apporto e alla capacità di collaborare di professionisti diversi.

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Articoli/Articles

TWO DAYS IN THE TV-CLINIC, LOOKING FOR SOME CARE

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SUMMARY

*This article examines the representation of care and cure on digital terrestrial television in Italy. It studies a sample of TV listings from two different days of the week, two weeks apart, and analyses the narratives of healthcare depicted in informative and entertainment programming (from *Elisir* to *House M.D.*, from *Medicina 33* to *Grey's Anatomy*, from *Mystery Diagnosis* to *Braccialetti Rossi*). The aims here are to understand whether care and cure are represented as exclusive or complementary activities within medical practices; which characters are predominantly given technical expertise and which have supporting roles (doctors, nurses, the patients themselves or their family members); and which rhetorical strategies are used in single programmes in order to address the theme of care.*

Medicine and Television: A Lucky Meeting

The world of medicine appeared first on Italian television more or less exactly when the medium itself appeared. On 26 January 1954, just three weeks after its inaugural TV broadcasts, the State channel Rai - Radio Televisione Italiana (at the time it was called Rai - Radio Audizioni Italiane, albeit for only a few months more) aired the first episodes of an informative science programme: *Conversazioni scientifiche*. The show dealt with topics ranging from healthy diets to twins, from psychosomatic medicine to sleep. A few months later *Dottor Antonio* débuted: it was the first Italian TV drama and an adaptation in

Key words: Television - Medicine - Representation - Care

four episodes of the eponymous novel by Giovanni Ruffini, which depicted the adventures of a doctor during the Unification. From the mid-50s, TV audiences witnessed the world of healthcare through the most varied forms and themes¹, taking up more time for networks and more space on schedules (thanks also to the introduction first of satellite and later digital TV from the 1990s), and gaining popularity for viewers. Stories about doctors and patients, progress in technology, alternative medicine and avant-garde treatments form a continuum of narrative practices relating to healthcare, with which audiences have become used to living (and interacting) on a daily basis. To question the reasons behind the success of medical television shows would require a discussion of its own. Suffice it to recall here only a few contributing factors. Firstly, medicine and care concern everybody. We all have health problems, we all interact with doctors or with unwell friends or relatives, we have all been frightened by the idea of falling ill and many of us are interested in preventing or delaying that from happening. Secondly, television continues to reach an audience that constitutes almost the totality of the Italian population (97.4%)²; it is identified by Italians as the third most important source of health information³; and 42.6% of people⁴ state an interest in acquiring information when health is mentioned on TV. Furthermore, the iconography of medicine has always been spectacular and engaging and audio-visual languages are extremely inclusive, making it easy to understand why the marriage between medicine and television has found little difficulty. And finally, the success of medical shows is certainly related to the cathartic effect of the small screen. At a time when death is stated and restated, but at the same time constantly evaded⁵, using the screen to observe the ways in which diseases work and applaud the heroic enterprises of health professionals allows us to exorcize illness and tame death (or, at least, the notions of both)⁶. While on the one hand medical television programmes “address basic anxieties about the security of individuals

in the world”, as Clive Seale rightly argues, they moreover “reassure audiences that they are surrounded by an effective rescue service”⁷. In medical dramas, the “defibrillator *topos*”⁸ resuscitates patients in every episode, and informative shows, like in *Medicina 33* or in *Elisir*, we get reassuring news every week regarding a cure for hepatitis or the fine tuning of a new piece of medical technology that can operate on bodies with the smallest margin of error. It therefore seems justified to hypothesize, adapting the categories formulated by Anthony Giddens (1991), that mediated and delocalized contact with illness and death can dispel the fears and insecurities connected to a lack of understanding of the medical/hospital universe. Indeed, one of the main effects of medical dramas is familiarizing their viewers with an otherwise foreign universe, that of medicine, according to research findings from the author (2015), from Solange Davin (2000; 2007) and Sabine Chalvon-Demersay (1999). An “impression of safety” that often emerges in accounts of spectators can be usefully illustrated in one example. Andrea, a 24-year-old student of psychology stated that he did not feel at all disoriented in the operating theatre when undergoing surgery, having seen such a context represented on TV: “I had an accident that required an operation on my whole elbow with ligament screws. Because I had bronchitis, on the day they couldn’t give me a general anaesthetic, so I can remember ever minute of the operation, that I watched carefully for a couple of hours. I have to say, having been able to observe the workings of operating theatres on TV dramas and other shows calmed me down. I knew that the surgeon didn’t have the time to talk to me, I knew that he operated on people daily for his job, and that the loud music on the radio was there to keep the team alert and active, not for their entertainment at the risk of injuring me. If I hadn’t seen such scenes on TV I would have been much more worried”⁹.

This brief digression aims to encourage the reader to contemplate the impact of care and cure on TV viewers, and more specifically

the modes of reception and the negotiation strategies that audiences adopt when consuming health-related TV products¹⁰. In this area, related studies remain patchy, as Atkin and Wallack (1990), Lupton (1994), Friedman (2004) and Regan et al. (2007) demonstrate. The results of my own field research in the area lead me to believe that the consumption of medical programming can be considered a first stage of self-treatment, where this is commonly defined as “the technical and symbolic systems and the combination of knowledge, representations and practices employed at an individual, familial or communal level, in order to address emergent threats or negative events that are perceived as dangerous for one’s health before consulting healthcare professionals”¹¹. Indeed, merely descriptive analysis of the representations of care and cure on TV would not be sufficient, rather they need to be studied more frequently from the point of view of their reception. This is no small matter, of course, considering that “the study of the ways in which medical practices and institutions are represented in the mass media and the reception of such representations by audiences is integral to interpretive scholarship attempting to understand the socio-cultural aspects of medicine and health-related knowledges and practices”¹².

The Genres and Formats of Care on Television

Up to now, I have referred to the worlds of medicine and care as interchangeable, when the one from the other is, of course, entirely distinct. While the world of care, intended broadly, includes processes, situations and players that often have nothing to do with the strictly medical, the world of medicine is nevertheless inextricably connected, permeated and oriented by care practices. In the same way, representations of care on TV draw from varied semantic fields (to give just a few examples: care for believers on behalf of religious institutions; care for children on behalf of parents, and vice versa; care for the environment and cultural heritage; care for animals; etc.).

Two days in the tv-clinic

In this article, however, I will take into consideration only those representations of care (with its double meaning of both care and cure) that can be explicitly ascribed to the fields of health and medicine. When limited in this way, how is care represented on television? Is it depicted in a univocal or heterogeneous way? Are care and cure represented as exclusive or complementary activities? Who is attributed predominantly certain skills (technical or relief support) or the position of carer (doctors, nurses, patients themselves or their relatives)? These are some of the questions that have guided my analysis of the TV shows taken into consideration here.

In order to grasp what kinds of representations of care are broadcast to Italian spectators on a daily basis, I constructed a sample from two days of digital terrestrial programming in March 2015, picking one weekday and one from the weekend, at the distance of a fortnight. By consulting the listings of the most popular networks in the weekly magazine *Film TV*, I identified those programmes that had explicit health and medical themes, recorded them via a Sky HD decoder, and watched them back at a later moment.

The programming on Monday 2 March 2015 was as follows¹³: at 11.00 a.m. *Elisir* (Rai Due), at 1.05 p.m. *Grey's Anatomy* (La7d), at 1.50 p.m. *Tg 2 Medicina 33* (Rai Due), at 4.40 p.m. *House M.D.* (Italia 1), at 11.40 p.m. *Mystery Diagnosis* (Real Time). The programmes aired on Sunday 15 March 2015 were: at 08.25 a.m. *One Born Every Minute* (Real Time), and at 9.30 p.m. *Braccialetti rossi 2* (Rai 1). Despite the disparity of frequency between the weekday and the weekend, and bearing in mind that other networks were not included in this sample, the dissemination, in quantitative terms, of medical programming on Italian TV at all hours of the day is evident. Before turning to their individual analysis, I believe that it is useful to recall the categories identified and employed by Massimiano Bucchi (2001) in order to classify the ways in which the theme of health - intended as cure, prevention, wellbeing, quality of life - is presented

in the mass media¹⁴. This taxonomy might constitute a first, useful criterion that gives order to the array of health communication, insofar as it allows us to pinpoint several particularities, aims and targets. Bucchi's first category is health education, and comprises communication regarding health protection, aimed at the majority or the entirety of a population, whose objective is predominantly prescriptive. Health education is therefore typically produced by institutional bodies, and utilizes the traditional media and its channels (posters, TV advertisements, newspaper and magazine articles) for a specific time period. The second, comprising information regarding new treatments, self-care, and broadly "advice" from doctors or experts, is addressed to an audience that is already interested in the subject of healthcare. It is usually transmitted via those media contexts that are specifically dedicated to health, such as the weekly supplements of some newspapers or specialist programming (e.g. *Elisir*, *Medicina 33*); this is the category of healthcare journalism. The third is that of health and medical information, which is broadcast in spaces that are not specifically dedicated to the theme and is addressed to a wider audience. Here the communicated technical content falls into the background (e.g. TV or printed news, etc.). Finally, there is the entire area of indirect communication on the subject of health and care/cure, which includes those broadcasts which do not have informative aims nor are specifically dedicated to healthcare topics. These are nevertheless types of communication that "contribute significantly to shaping the conceptions, representations and stereotypes on which public debates on the subject of health are later shaped"¹⁵. This category contains all of those products, from TV series (*House M.D.*, *Grey's Anatomy*) to commercials and advertising, in which medical knowledge, institutions or scenarios are used to narrative ends. The four categories identified by Bucchi can in turn be interpreted in the light of a framework proposed by Mazzoleni and Sfardini (2009), which seeks to order the various genres of televised communication.

The framework - which takes inspiration from that proposed by Renger and Wiesner (2007) to analyse the press - situates the genres of TV communication on a continuum according to the rhetoric of their address. At one extreme, we find the realm of information, which has a low entertainment value and a high informative function (including investigative and analytical TV reports, whose rhetoric is that of "discovery"). In a sense, programming such as *Medicina 33* would be located at the point where this area blurs into the next; that is, the multiform area of infotainment, which has equal entertainment and informative functions. Within this area we can situate the expanded and dramatized communication that is typical of Utility TV: television as agent in the service of the citizen, resolving the problems and questions of daily life. An example that is attributable to this area would be *Elisir*, which works above all "on the cognitive dimension of the viewer's knowledge and understanding, without overlooking the use of "emotive" elements or those relating to play and entertainment¹⁶. At the other extreme of the continuum, we have the lowest level of the informative mission, and the highest entertainment function: this would be the information/entertainment, where the elements of emotion and spectacle prevail over all else (this is the terrain of certain medical dramas and documentary drama).

It is not difficult to understand, even taking into consideration only the names of the programmes listed above, the level of variety of actors, processes and rhetorical strategies that are employed to depict just one theme. Nevertheless, one common feature emerges from a brief examination of the selected programmes: healthcare, as far as health professionals are concerned, appears predominantly as a mode of *curing*, as therapeutic techniques, rational actions that aim to repair the body and interventions from a kind of medicine that "has conceived of itself as a science, albeit an applied science, that is practical and professional: it is "knowing what to do" when facing disease, imbalance, disability"¹⁷. On the other hand, healthcare intended as

care - its personal dimension that refers more to the ability to take care of others, to “provide answers that are not necessarily and not only of a technical nature”¹⁸ - is barely hinted at, it is pushed to the background, at times included only to pay lip service to the politically correct. Care does not appear to feature within the primary responsibilities of healthcare professionals (doctors or nurses) and for that reason is entrusted to groups of peers, affected family members or via the self-cure of the patient. Evidently, evaluating the representation of healthcare by means of single episodes or instalments of more complex series will not provide an exhaustive nor complete image of the media panorama in this area. Nevertheless, what follows can be understood as the results of a sociological experiment, of an alien who tunes into Italian television for a day and draws some conclusions (that are necessarily partial and restricted).

A ‘Care-less’ Tendency in Informative Programming

During the morning, the audience met two of Rai’s long-standing shows. This begins at 11 a.m. with *Elisir*, a mixed format show that has sought to enliven health information by embracing the communication techniques of infotainment since its début on Rai Tre in 1996 (on Sundays, during prime time). Presented by Michele Mirabella, the programme has enjoyed much success, and with time has abandoned lighter entertainment (in the form of quizzes and VIPs in the studio) in favour of more direct medical information. In accordance with the network, Mirabella carries out a public service function; and though his presenting style is ironic and informal, at the beginning of the episode he stresses that “we are sure of the information we give because we consult experts”. The episode of Monday 2 March begins with a clarification that is indicative for this discussion. Mirabella welcomes the spectators by saying “today we will deal with fat, on the role of fats [...] not of fat people, of the obese, but the role of fats in the blood. And then we will talk about the

prostate and about prevention". This opening sentence is particularly significant in that the presenter immediately clarifies that the show's attention will not be on a group of people or their condition of sufferance, but on a measurable entity that can be isolated from the experience of sickness. When situated within an imagined community of "informers" that includes the presenter, writers and doctors hosted in the studio, Mirabella continues, affirming that "we are certain that the prevention of cardio-vascular diseases is reliant on the regulation of fats in the blood. We are addressing this issue now as there are new treatments, new cures on the horizon. Letting people know about these treatments is one of many satisfactions for us here on *Elisir*". The buzz word of the episodes, which the presenter will highlight soon after, is "cholesterol". Mirabella immediately associates himself with a traditional, biomedical approach of an etiological framework¹⁹. If the causes of those diseases are fats, it would suffice simply to find the right way of eradicating them or keeping them under control. For this reason, following all kinds of questions posed to the expert of the day - a full professor of internal medicine from the University of L'Aquila - Mirabella eventually tells the spectators that it is necessary to develop higher levels of good cholesterol by means of physical exercise and a healthy diet. Up to this point, the spectator would struggle to grasp the innovation of the treatments (or cures) that the show is proposing. Then the presenter takes the floor again to ask the crucial question: "Diets are not enough, the careful management of our lives is not enough, long walks at a steady pace are not enough [...] this needs treatment. What should we do?". The doctor's response: "Fortunately, for years now we have these drugs, called statins, which are not the only drugs to combat cholesterol, but without a doubt are the foundational stone on which the fight against cholesterol is built". The "guilty parties" are the blood fats, and a pharmaceutical treatment is necessary to destroy them. The only really efficient cure, in this case, is a pharmaceutical, and nothing else.

It is clear that in a programme that lasts one hour it would be impossible to broach all of the particulars of the topic of “fats”; nevertheless, the authors of the show decided to exclude entirely the social dimension of the problem. We hear that the accumulation of fats in the blood is principally due to an unhealthy diet, but nobody questions why, for some people at least, it would not suffice to correct this simply with recourse to a healthier diet or physical exercise. Despite the fact that research in this sector (e.g. in Brewis, 2011) has been ongoing for many years, there is no allusion to the possibility that unhealthy eating could have a socio-economic origin, and often concerns the poorest strata of society²⁰. Despite the fact that food is notoriously a great way to de-stress, and that many dietary disorders have psychological or psychosomatic origins, Mirabella prefers to offer a pharmacological solution to a problem that is posed quite generally, without questioning the dynamics that produced it, nor when it might be more useful to act via an holistic approach that is centred on the person her/himself, in order to bring about longer-lasting effects.

In the second part of the instalment, the discussion turns to possible problems with the prostate, to tests that it is wise to undertake at different ages in one’s life, and to the completely different attitudes that men and women have towards prevention. It would be of little use to address here the issue of when prevention became a type of health-care (a means not only of care but also to cure), calling into question that age-old saying that “prevention is better than cure” which ratifies a distinction between the two processes. Today, prevention is just one of many aspects that links to the subject of health, intended not only as an absence of disease but as a general condition of psycho-physical wellbeing, that demands constant care and attention “in perspective”, too. At the end of the transmission, Mirabella observes that, as far as the male approach to prevention is concerned, “his first defence is his girlfriend (let’s hope she is listening), second is his

general practitioner”. This element reaffirms a deeply stereotyped reality: care, intended less as treatment than as taking responsibility for the management of somebody’s entire life, is entrusted first and foremost to relatives, and especially to female relatives. Men are not able to take care of themselves because, the doctor affirms, “by nature he is a coward, because when a problem emerges he would wait two years, that would be two weeks for a woman, to go and see a doctor”. The reasons that cause men and women to have differing attitudes towards prevention, and the implications of this, are not expanded upon during the course of the programme.

At 1.50 p.m., it is the turn of *Medicina 33*, a similarly long-running program that has had no less success than *Elisir*, which follows the 1 p.m. Tg2 news on Rai 2. First aired in 1982 with the name *Trentatré*, recalling when doctors on home visits would say to patients “dica 33” (“say 33” – the equivalent of a doctor asking a patient to cough or breathe deeply while listening to their chest with a stethoscope). The show changed its name in 1985 and its presenter only in 2014, when Luciano Onder left and Laura Berti took his place. The opening credits of the programme show a rotating cube in a 3D graphic effect, the faces of which show images of an ordinary doctor-patient meeting, a researcher examining a test tube, a doctor carrying out an ultrasound and a patient lying on a hospital cot, Rita Levi Montalcini (symbolizing research), and finally three doctors in surgical masks in the operating theatre. These represent some of the “faces of medicine”, and only a few of the areas covered in the programme. The rotation of the cube does not prioritize any particular images, but four of five denote aspects that are more linked to cure than to care. Only one of the five images implies that the more human and less technical competence, that is taking care of people, is also an aspect of medicine: in this case, it is exemplified by the dialogue between the professional and the lay person. This episode covers two topics, as in the case of *Elisir*: a new diagnostic technique, and a commentary

on some recently-published statistics on the use of pharmaceuticals by Italians. The episode begins, channelling *Elisir* further still, with the presenter stating “Today we will show you a very innovative diagnostic technique. It is called OCT, it studies our arteries from the inside, and it is capable of identifying those plaques that a coronarography might miss”. The leitmotiv of the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, and in particular cholesterol in the blood, connects the two programmes. The combination of the different aspects of a single theme at different times, chosen more or less arbitrarily, appears to set an agenda in matters of health; it expresses a salient issue, placing it on the order of business in a public scenario. As such, *cure* sits centrally on the order of business for informative programming. The description of the new procedure is provided by a cardiologist from the San Giovanni Addolorata Hospital in Rome, “where the technique is carried out at the bed of the patient”. The doctor explains that a man who was admitted for a sharp pain in his chest was first given a coronarography, however that this did not provide clear enough images. Once the OCT had been completed, it was possible to identify arterial plaque and insert a stent. We barely see the patient: we only see doctors in a room, examining the images of his arteries on monitors. In this case, the patient is no more than a dummy, and his role in the enactment is to support, in flesh and blood, a technical, scientific demonstration. After all, what is important, for this service is not the patient but the technique. Once again, healthcare is represented in its most instrumental and technological phases via a computerized diagnosis. Surprisingly, the first indication of the doctor-patient relationship and therefore of the more human dimension of healthcare appears in the second part of the programme, which is dedicated to “ how many and which pharmaceuticals are consumed in Italy”. To provide a commentary on this data, the programme turns to the vice-secretary of the Italian Federation of Family Doctors in Rome. The base assumption is that

“in general, experts have warned, we are consuming too many drugs, and we rely on them chiefly in the demand for health”. It seems therefore that even patients are looking for cures, in the shape of medicine. When the programme comes to address the question of antidepressants, which are the most-prescribed drug within their category, yet hold a record for inconsistent prescription or use, the presenter asks the guest if such misguided treatments are evidence of a detachment between doctor and patient. The doctor promptly says no: “interrupted use of antidepressants happens because patients are a little more difficult”. Then he adds: “It is true that there should be a more direct relationship. Sometimes there is, but not always, and when they feel a bit better, they tend to let it slip”. We might note here that, in this case too, treatments, particularly long-term treatments, are the responsibility of the patient: it is their own fault if they nonchalantly abandon their treatment. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated elsewhere²¹ that a more continuous dialogue between doctors and patients produces greater compliance on behalf of the latter, who benefit from having looked carefully at the pros and cons of certain pharmaceuticals with their doctor. The question of the doctor-patient relationship disappears as the programme continues: there is no further comment on what might be the best approaches in the relationship, nor on what strategies might improve compliance in certain patients. A general practitioner whom I interviewed in Bologna explained that simply prescribing a drug is not necessarily taken for granted nowadays. It is necessary to dedicate time and patience to a dialogue with the patient, listening to him, in order to mete out a compromise: “You sometimes give up on a perfect medicinal treatment so as to regain the patient’s compliance. If, on the other hand, you say “this must be taken”, “but seriously”, “it must be taken, full stop”, the patient will walk out, throw away everything, and not take anything. In that case you have failed not only to communicate with them but also to reach the intended outcome”²².

Medicina 33 therefore indicates fleetingly the fact that medicinal treatment (cure) can be more efficient when it is contextualized within the context of care, of its responsibility being provided to the patient by the doctor, but the discussion is not at all developed.

The Art and Science of Care: Medical Dramas and the Reversal of Stereotypes

While *Medicina 33* was concluding, an episode of *Grey's Anatomy* was on-going on another channel: La7d, which broadcasts re-runs from the first episode of the first season (subscribers to Sky could watch the final episodes of the 11th season during the same weeks).

Grey's Anatomy is a medical drama that narrates the professional activities of a group of surgery interns at the Seattle Grace Hospital. From the opening credits it is clear that the romantic thread of the story is by no means secondary: medical images are rapidly interchanged with romantic situations. *Grey's Anatomy*'s narrative structure tends towards repetition. In every episode, the voice-over of the protagonist, Meredith Grey, introduces an ethical or emotional dilemma which functions as a backdrop to the medical problems of the patients and the personal problems of the protagonists. In this way, the life stories of the protagonists become medicalized: a medical language is applied to the lived experiences even in those circumstances that transcend the context of healthcare. In the pilot episode, the first of the two broadcast on La7d on 2nd March, the interns are on their first working day at the hospital, and their superiors teach them the rules in what appears little more than military training: "Your first shift starts now and lasts 48 hours. You're interns, grunts, nobodies, bottom of the surgical food chain. You run labs, write orders, work every second night until you drop, and don't complain". For the moment, the preparatory rules leading up to the "cure" are simple: try not to kill someone. The concern shared by all is whether they will be able to employ the right surgical procedures, and therefore succeed in assisting as many

operations as possible. We see George, the clumsiest intern, visibly shaking in the operating theatre, repeating to himself “Open, identify, ligate, remove, irrigate, close. Open, identify, ligate, remove, irrigate, close”. For George, the procedure is everything, all he needs to complete the operation. In the mean time, Meredith is dealing with a patient who pages her via an emergency code. Once she has hastened to the patient’s room, she discovers there was no emergency, but that she called her because she was bored: as she recounts, “I had to go all Exorcist to get her to even pick up the phone”. The doctor replies that she is not there for her entertainment. Alex Karev, the biggest braggart among the interns, finds himself showing off his status right away: he orders a nurse to give antibiotics to a patient. When the latter asks him if he’s sure about the treatment (which in fact turns out to be wrong), Karev responds arrogantly: “Well, I don’t know. I’m only an intern. Why don’t you go spend four years in med school and then let me know if it’s the right diagnosis? She’s short of breath. She’s got fever. She’s post-op. Start the antibiotics. God, I hate nurses”.

These three stories give us some indication of the representation of healthcare in this particular episode: fundamentally, caring about other people is not that kind of social interaction that we might expect to see between colleagues, between doctors, or between doctors and nurses²³. Regarding the role of nurses, an observation that is valid in all medical dramas (with the exceptions of *ER* and *Nurse Jackie*): despite the hospital setting, where nurses have categorical roles and ultimately are of a much greater number than the doctors, they appear merely as extras who speak little and whom are never named. They appear among varied figures that intervene during emergencies, administering medicine to patients or periodically checking drip-feeds. From this perspective, when it is present, care is nonetheless the prerogative of doctors.

The initial concerns of the young doctors relate not so much to their relationships with patients than to the reparation and exploration of their

organs. Furthermore, the interns prefer to relate their close experiences with surgery to one-another, rather than spending a few minutes more in the patient's room. This is precisely what occurs for Meredith's patient, who is doubtless demanding and plaintive, yet is forced to pretend to be seriously ill to be able to talk with her own doctor.

The first episode is clearly dedicated to training the interns to the curing process. The one lesson about caring that George learns the hard way pertains to foresight, when he loses a patient in surgery yet had promised the family that everything would be fine. Dr Burke, his supervisor and a severe, demanding surgeon, has few doubts: "You what? They have four little girls. This is my case. Did you hear me promise? The only one that can keep a promise like that is God, and I haven't seen him holding a scalpel lately. You never promise a patient's family a good outcome! I thought you make promises to Mrs Savitch? You get to be the one to tell her that she's a widow". The care that George ultimately puts into communicating her loss to Mrs Savitch is the same that Burke had urged him to adopt before the operation: reassuring patients is one thing, promising a good outcome to surgery is entirely another. As well as demonstrating a lack of care, characteristics like competition, a concentration on the most technical aspects of medicine and the refusal of human contact on behalf of the interns can be read as an attempt to gain authority in the eyes of patients and their superiors, and to ratify a different status to non-professionals. Jecker and Self (1991) suggest that this is a possible motive for which medicine, historically speaking, has more often been linked to cure than to care: "the presence of fierce competition and marginal status during its early years forged a mission for medicine that focused on achieving cultural authority and an elite status for its practitioners. Efforts to gain authority and status required physicians to stand apart from laypersons and develop exclusive modes of language, technique and theory. This puts physicians at odds with activities, such as patient empathy and care, that

call upon abilities of engagement and identification with others”²⁴. The question of the relationship with patients, which is by no means neglected over the course of later seasons of the show, is introduced from the beginning of the second episode. Meredith’s voice-over states: “It’s all about lines. The finish line at the end of residency. Waiting in line for a chance at the operating table. And then there’s the most important line, the line separating you from the people you work with. It doesn’t help to get too familiar. To make friends. You need boundaries between you and the rest of the world. Other people are far too messy. It’s all about lines. Drawing lines in the sand and praying like hell no one crosses them”. Doctor-patient relationship is not mentioned, if not via the synecdoche of the operating table. The patient is just body, matter on which to operate. And yet it is clear that patients are included too in “the rest of the world” that Meredith mentions. The emotional distance that the surgeon must maintain, they claim, is exemplified through the episode via two ploys, one tragic and the other comic. In the first case, a young rape victim arrives in the emergency room, with shoes among her personal effects that are identical to those worn by Meredith that same morning. In that moment, Meredith sees herself on the stretcher, she sees herself as a patient: in need, fragile, vulnerable. This causes her to take particular care of the patient, and to worry continuously about her condition. In the second case, Cristina Yang and Alex Karev, the two most cynical interns who are least inclined to human contact, complain at one point that there is a lack of sick people: “Don’t people get sick anymore? I mean, how are we supposed to get any OR time if everyone’s gonna just live?”. With nothing else to do, they decide to visit the patients’ rooms and attempt the least stimulating part of their job: communicating prognoses to family members. “Look. I’ll take ten, you take ten. Get in, get out. No smiling, no hugging, no letting them cry. Just be quick about it”. Reeling from unwelcome embraces given by relatives earlier in the morning, the

two rapidly and mechanically set to communicating the information, hastily evading embraces and any relation with patients and their families. This signals that care is a part of the doctor's job, but it is the least stimulating, most embarrassing, and most disagreeable part. In the mean time, another two declinations of care materialize. Izzie, another intern, goes to medicate a Chinese girl hidden in the car park outside the hospital, having understood that the latter does not have medical insurance. Izzie therefore risks her own position, but demonstrates that she is not a rigid and insensitive doctor. Meanwhile, Doctor Derek Shepherd, the hospital's neurosurgeon, has watched over the rape victim all night. His motivation is simple, as he explains to Meredith, and once again relates to recognition, to putting oneself in the shoes of the suffering person. Derek explains that he has four very maternal sisters, and they certainly would have come immediately should something similar happen to him, as he would want them to be. With no parents, and having moved to Seattle just three weeks before, the patient would otherwise have nobody waiting for her when she wakes up. In this case, the simplest demonstration of care - being close to someone in a moment of sufferance - is embodied by a doctor, a man, whom from the first episode has been characterized as the series' sex symbol, and who is a specialist in one of the most technical branches of surgery.

Grey's Anatomy therefore reverses the stereotype that care is entrusted to female figures, helpers or in ancillary roles, by depicting a neurosurgeon at the bedside of one of many patients for a whole night, and a female intern (Cristina Yang) as unscrupulous and horrified by human contact.

The afternoon's schedule continues with reruns of the fifth season of the extremely successful series *House M.D.*, broadcast on Italia 1, which introduced the politically incorrect to the field of healthcare on TV. Indeed, while before the début of *House M.D.* "most shows focused on a high level of expertise coupled with a human approach

to medicine, where curing and good bedside manner go hand in hand”²⁵, in this series the protagonist affirms in one of the very first episodes that “humanity is overrated”: the human touch has no place in House’s medical practice. On the contrary, he “firmly establishes medicine as a scientific endeavour. The scientific method and logical deduction are his primary means of discovery, with his interest in patients only extending as far as his interest in their various maladies. House sees bodies, and the symptoms they exhibit, as pieces of a logical and solvable puzzle”²⁶. The series, which in 2008 won the award for the most watched TV series in the world²⁷ having been distributed in 66 countries, narrates the experiences of Gregory House, an eccentric and misanthropic doctor who battles with extremely rare clinical cases. The intricate diagnostics of the show are emphasized more than in any other medical drama, to such an extent that “every episode is resolved with a lesson in how to engage with patients in critical conditions, using more-or-less orthodox methods”²⁸. In reality, the point is this: the more-or-less orthodox methods are precisely those that make the difference between care and cure. Not only does medical technology take preference over patient-centred approaches in House’s modus operandi, but moreover the disrespectful and sadistic way that runs his clinic is ultimately legitimated since it is effective. The series produces an image of doctor-patient interaction that is characterized more in terms of the reparation of a sick body than of care for a person. For House, the patient is “first and foremost an object to explore scientifically, not someone with whom to engage in idle chatter”²⁹. Indeed, one of the statements made by House in the first episode has become famous: that he became a doctor not to treat patients but to treat illnesses. The narration of the patient is therefore superfluous, if not actually deceptive. House does everything he can to avoid interacting with the patients, he does not want to see them, nor talk to them, he does not check up on them except from behind electronic screens³⁰. The total alienation of the

patients from their sickness and from their own doctor is denied, for House, in favour of Evidence Based Medicine, that same kind of medicine that has produced “a shift in the scientific foundation of medical knowledge from care for the individual to epidemiology and the health of the populace”³¹. As such, in the first episode aired by Italia 1 on Monday 2 March³², House enters the patient’s room only at the 49th minute, when the episode is about to end (and the “case” is mostly resolved). Until that moment, his hypotheses were based on information gathered by his assistants from tests and examinations. And his assistants waste no less time than House chatting to the patient: while doing an encephalogram and monitoring her, first from behind a glass wall and then from a computer screen, at a certain point they notice that her heart-rate flat-lines. They leap up, worried that she may have arrested, and only then notice that she is no longer in the room. This episode is not enough to make the doctors understand that a little more attention for the patient would not only lead them toward the care, but moreover help them gather clinical data more efficiently. In fact, a few sequences later, we observe another test on the patient, who is hooked up to a sensor. She asks, “will it hurt?”. “No, give me your arm”, answers Dr Taub, one of House’s assistants. “You can ask nicely”. As though it were somehow needed, the doctor even justifies his own lack of humanity, saying “I learned at the med school you don’t actually cure with kindness”. House’s approach is infamous among his colleagues, to the extent that when a need emerges to liberate an office, the hospital director opts for House’s, noting ironically that “other doctors actually use their offices for crazy stuff like seeing patients. Not throwing a ball against the wall and calling it work”. The reply she receives is: “it’s his process. That ball saves lives”. Evidently the question of care vs cure is particularly carefully articulated in this episode. It might seem that House is dedicated only and ex-

clusively to finding a cure – and the subtext is certainly this – however, the finale of the episode complicates such a simple reading. The patient is a personal trainer who is obsessed with her figure; despite all of the pharmaceuticals with which the doctors experiment, at the end of the episode she feels better when given a slice of chocolate cake. House defines it as “your cure”. She is diagnosed with hereditary coproporphyrin: the body of the patient does not make enough of a certain enzyme, important for liver and other vital organs. The treatment is a high carbohydrate diet, rich in sugar. The patient asks if it “is treatable”, and House tells her that she needs to follow a diet that is rich in sugars. At that point, the patient asks if there is another option; House’s response is negative: there is a drug that controls its symptoms, but it is not a cure. The patient opts to begin with this³³, but House does not oppose her choice, conceding: “Understand. There’s not many people who have the guts to admit they’d rather be pretty than healthy. The income’s better and you get more action”. His angry and disheartened assistants react differently: “I bought it. I bought that it was really about trying to make people’s lives a little better”. This circumstance thus recalls the affirmation of Jecker and Self, for whom “it is unfortunate, as well as confusing, then, to assume that doctors cure, as *opposed to care*”³⁴. Beginning with the assumption that attempting to cure a patient is ordinarily an expression of physician’s care for the patient, Jecker and Self consider it more opportune to propose a distinction, within the semantic field of care, between *care of* and *care about* the patient. They write: “a health professional who cares *about* a patient makes a cognitive or emotional decision that the welfare of the patient is of great importance. Caring about requires keeping the patient’s best interest in the forefront of mind and heart. By contrast, a health professional who cares *for* a patient engages in a deliberate and ongoing activity of responding to the patient’s

needs. Caring for, executed in an exemplary or excellent way, involves deciphering the patient's particular condition and needs”³⁵. While it is clear that House does not possess any concern for what happens to the patient, at the same time he scorns that kind of paternalism that is “an attempt to justify performing (or omitting) an action that is contrary to a patient’s expressed wishes, yet judged to be in patient’s best interest”³⁶, which clearly aligns him with the “caring for” camp. It is certainly not reassuring relating to a doctor like House, but perhaps the mantra that justifies his approach (“What would you rather have? A doctor who holds your hand while you die or a doctor who ignores you while making you better?”) should be reconsidered from a less Manichean point of view. The blurring of care and cure or of caring about and caring for reflects, in *House M.D.*, a further distinction that is common in the world of health: that between medicine as a science and as an art³⁷. As Saunders writes, “the art and science of medicine are inseparable, part of a common culture. Knowing is an art; science requires personal participation in knowledge. Intellectual problems have an impersonal, objective character in that they can be conceived of as existing relatively independently of the particular thought, experiences, aims and actions of individual people. Without such an impersonal, objective character, the practice of medicine would be impossible”³⁸. On the other hand, Saunders, continues, “Doctor factors such as emotions, bias, prejudice, risk-aversion, tolerance of uncertainty, and personal knowledge of the patient also influence clinical judgment. The practice of clinical medicine with its daily judgments is both science and art”³⁹. For this reason, the author invites us to keep in mind the fact that “what is black and white in the abstract often becomes grey in practice, as clinicians seek to meet their patients’ needs”⁴⁰.

Parents, Friends and Peers: Relationships as Care Communities

At 11.40 p.m., the evening schedule concludes with *Mystery Diagnosis*, an American TV show aired on Real Time Italia, which combines documentary, scientific information and fiction, and narrates the stories of patients who contracted “illnesses that baffle the experts”. The episodes have a standard format: a prologue in which interviews and images introduce the mystery that will be resolved during the episode; then a voice-over that introduces the day’s “case”, which is complemented by the accounts of the patient, her/his relatives and the doctors. The representation of healthcare here is curious. As we note from the opening credits (and the title), the programme intends to talk about diagnoses, not ill people, and yet the diseases are deeply rooted in the biographies and lived experiences of the patients: images of bodies are interspersed with others of daily life, and the voice-over explains the extent to which the disease weighed on the lives of the patients, who surrounded them during the experience, what their anxieties were. The doctors are not depicted as inhuman, at best as professionals that are sometimes hasty and superficial. One of the characteristics of the “mystery” diseases is that they are not immediately recognized on first contact with the doctor. For this reason, during the course of the episode, patients usually consult more than one healthcare professional. The most interesting element for this discussion is that when the protagonists finally find the doctor who is able to diagnose correctly, who will resolve their difficult case and perhaps find a treatment, s/he is (*ex-post*) described as someone who was finally able to take the right care of them, something which had been absent in the previous interactions with doctors. When the protagonist of the episode is brought into a specialized clinic for genetic tests, on the basis of recommendations from other doctors, the relatives say: “Dr. Moreng made us feel at ease right away. She listened to what we had to say”; and “Finally, we had found someone who

was working for the good of Eleyna". In the next episode, following an appointment with a doctor that mistook a serious disease (paragonimiasis) for an influenza, the mother of protagonist Adam seeks out a specialist online who can solve their enigma. She recounts: "when I met the doctor, I was convinced that he would work out the cause. He calmed me down. He was very self-assured". Whether this is an exaggerated rhetorical strategy or not, the cure appears successful only when it also accounts for the worries and suffering of all the people involved. This representation of care is the opposite of that seen in *House*. Here, without a shadow of doubt, the capable doctor is depicted as one who cares not only for the patient, but also about the patient: paraphrasing *House*, a doctor who holds your hand *while you get better*.

In the factual series *One Born Every Minute*, a kind of docu-reality show that was broadcast on Sunday 15 March 2015 at 08.25 a.m., care and cure emerge principally in the moments in which the obstetricians do their rounds of the soon-to-be-mothers, and spend time chatting to the patients. This distracts and calms them during their contractions. We can observe how the midwives form a kind of community around the pregnant women, consulting one another and, in the episode in question, asking colleagues for help in breaking the water of a woman before calling the doctor, who "has a more direct approach". The attention for the psychological state of the women is constant. The more experienced patients, accompanied by their companions, are given greater privacy, while younger women are monitored more carefully and asked questions that seek to clarify their emotional state (in relation to their partners, too). In some ways, in part thanks to the effect of reality TV, the series naturalizes the role of the midwife, depicting a professional who deals contemporaneously with care and cure, making it difficult to separate the two moments or attitudes towards the new mothers. In this sense, the rhetoric of the show is by no means forced; on the contrary, the midwives are depicted

ed with upright characters, clear-headed and direct, but not intent singularly on the more technical aspects of their work. The spontaneity with which they are immortalized in their work makes the interconnection of care and cure less a finish line to aim for than the implicit foundation of the relationship between professional and patient.

A curious dimension of care and cure emerges during prime time, in the series *Braccialetti rossi 2*, produced by Rai Fiction and based on the book *Polseres Vermelles* by the Spanish writer Albert Espinosa. The series narrates the story of the lives, illnesses and recuperation of a group of adolescents who have been admitted to a hospital. Leo, the leader of the group, gives each of his friends one of the red wristbands that mark his operations. These become the symbol of the group. The last episode of the second series was aired on 5 March. In reality, the episode is slightly anomalous, insofar as much of it is not set in the usual hospital ward but outside, on the island of San Nicola, where the group travel to deliver the letter from a recently deceased patient to an old friend. Despite the change of scenery, the elements that characterize the series broadly are all present. Illness is a rite of passage that, in this context, overlaps with other rites, from infancy to adolescence, or from adolescence to adulthood. The community of peers (other companions, ill too or recently healed) accompany the group through this period of their life, as daily events assume different tones and bristle with difficulty. Those who have already lived such experiences become mentors, guides, a support and a helping hand during the transformations that the protagonists must face. Their parents, when present, are unable to face up to the dramatic situations that present themselves in their children's lives: they cannot understand or endure them, they despair, as (during this episode) in the case of the father of Flaminia, a blind girl who returns from an unsuccessful operation. The doctors and nurses are humane and compassionate people that are ready to agree to their patients' requests, though in

the series they have only secondary roles. For a change, the real protagonists are the patients and the care community that they construct: the so-called rescue community mentioned above is represented here not by the doctors but by other patients admitted to the same hospital. As such, the group meet up in the evening in each other's rooms, and they reassure each other before going to bed. They quite organically persevere in their efforts to bring every person, even those that are suffering the most or unconscious, into their group and way of life. In this episode, the young Rocco spends his days in Bea's room, though she is in a coma, telling her the stories of their companions on the Island, encouraging her to follow his lead. He had been in a coma too, and tells her that shortly before waking up he dreamt of a pool, and that he woke up only when he finally found the courage to dive in. Bea will awaken only when Chicco, another patient in the hospital, apologises for having unwillingly caused the accident that brought her to the hospital. The whole community is watched over by Davide, an “ex-braccialetto rosso”, who passed away during heart surgery, though appears invisibly to all but one of the group and can intervene in their reality. The series depicts countless representations of care, ranging from the sharing of fears and daily difficulties to small gestures of attention, such as when Chicco lends to Flaminia a piano that she had always wanted to play, despite her impaired vision. And when one of the group faces an aggressive disease with a low survival rate, and he decides to distance himself from the group, they remind him how he had helped each of them and so it is his turn to allow himself to be helped in return. The lyrics of the show's soundtrack is emblematic of this “communal care”: “Take care of my secret and ask me if I am happy, be ready for the start of the world, tonight I will say “yes”. Take care of my past and ask me If we are happy, be ready for the start of the world, it's wonderful saying “yes”. Be ready, it's wonderful saying “yes”. That way we'll learn to let it all

Two days in the tv-clinic

go, to not fear love so long as it is there, and let's bet whether there is more life in a miracle or inside a ward and laugh at a destiny that changes as we change our minds".

Unlike other medical dramas, *Braccialetti rossi* is less interested in showing how illness works than how young people respond to it. Indeed, the series suggests that ill people are ill people, but that they are also much more at the same time: the boy who falls in love, the one who struggles with his studies, and so on. Illness makes every thing and every experience necessary, important and intense, and it is often compared to a workout (and the depiction of hospital's rehabilitation gym supports this). Perhaps it is for this reason - as well as for the show's target audience, which includes very young spectators - that the young people are depicted as being full of life, despite their suffering. But the real unit of measurement for care in this series is the friendship that emerges among the protagonists: the group of the "braccialetti" is what allows them to overcome their daily difficulties, not least of all the solitude that often accompanies sickness. In scientific literature, as unfortunately in practice too, care is associated more with palliative medicine than with its many other branches. The series proposes an opposite message: the necessity that care permeates the entire experience of illness, and as such that it brings us to represent patients as dynamic and living at every stage, until the last day of one's life.

Closing Remarks

At the end of this overview of programming from a sample of two days, it is possible to maintain that care and cure are aspects of medicine that are depicted with different grades of complexity according to the genre of the programme in which they feature. In scientific-informative shows *Elisir* and *Medicina 33*, thanks to the rhetorical strategy of unadorned, candid information (which goes hand in hand with its implied scientific and objective basis), cure and its related

aspects prevail: new pharmacological treatments, new investigative diagnostic techniques, data relating to public health. The only emphases of the show relating to care are those which address prevention, that in any case call for the patient to adopt their own responsibility. Care is thus not presented as a prerogative, instrument or objective for health professionals. In medical dramas and documentaries, references to care are frequent and its representations are often composite, despite the fact that it is often one aspect of a hospital setting in which cure doubtless dominates. In *House M.D.*, care is characterized as a superfluous attention if not a hindrance to more efficient scientific methods that are typical of EBM. The diagnostic rationality of the doctor serves to repair bodies, and nothing else. However, the ultimate respect that House affords to the patient and their needs and desires makes of him a doctor that “cares for” the patient. *Grey's Anatomy* offers the spectator a variety of situations in which care and cure become explicit in the wards of a hospital. The series overturns diverse stereotypes, for example attributing the virtues of compassionate care to a male neurosurgeon and the characteristics of coldness, competition and distance to a young female intern. Professional care is a fundamental element of the healing process in the medical documentary *Mystery Diagnosis*, just as the professionalism of the midwives of *One Born Every Minute* is a quality that is taken for granted. And finally, one of the most original representations of care and cure is to be found in *Braccialetti Rossi 2*. The combination of humanity and the context of the hospital, that is the series' setting, is the only one, among those shows analysed here, that prioritizes care over cure. Illness forms a rite of passage that must be tackled collectively by a group that includes those who are facing it and those who already have. The most efficient form of care is the relationship with the group of companions, peers and other patients in the hospital.

Two days in the tv-clinic

Ultimately care is not excluded from televised representations of medicine, but the context in which it is most often portrayed is that of the fictional medical drama, the domain of the plausible but not of the real. While it is true that fiction is a powerful tool when in the hands of the spectator, insofar as it can “help individuals to take a distance, to imagine alternatives and thereby to question traditional practices”⁴¹, we must hope that these alternatives can ultimately go beyond the screen and enter into our hospitals, if they have not already.

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Two days in the tv-clinic

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1. For a catalogue of all shows with a medical theme on Italian television, see GISOTTI R., SAVINI M., *Tv buona dottoressa? La medicina nella televisione italiana dal 1954 ad oggi*. Roma, Rai-Eri, 2010; DIONISIO A., *Quando la medicina si fa in Tv. Benessere, salute e professione sanitaria rappresentate nel piccolo schermo*. Napoli, Guida, 2009.
2. Source: CENSIS, *47° Rapporto Annuale sulla situazione sociale del Paese: Comunicazione e media*. Roma, 11 Ottobre 2013.
3. Source: MONITOR BIOMEDICO 2014, *Informati ed insoddisfatti: verso una sanità minimale?* Roma, Fondazione Censis, 27 October 2014, p. 8. The other sources from which respondents claim to have acquired much of their medical knowledge include, in first and second places, general practitioners (73.3%) and specialist doctors (27.0%), followed by television (19.3%) and the internet (19.2%), which consign not only friends and family (14.8%) to a lower position, but also newspapers (8.2%), pharmacists (7.8%) and patient associations (0.9%).
4. Monitor Biomedico statistics are based on a nationwide sample of 1000 individuals.
5. CANGUILHEM G., *Il normale e il patologico*. Torino, Einaudi, 1998.
6. At the peak of *ER*'s success in the USA, many critics justified its popularity in relation to a growing anxiety over the efficiency of the health system. Even Stephen Spielberg, co-producer of the series, observed that "People are afraid to go to the emergency room, they fear not getting the right treatment and ending in the hands of pitiless doctors. In *ER*, though, they see that even

in the chaos of the emergency room, whoever comes gets decent healthcare; that the doctors are tired but at the moment of truth they are completely committed". (Source: BIZIO S., *Al pronto soccorso firmato Spielberg*. La Repubblica, 11 November 1994, p. 43, my translation).

7. SEALE C., *Media and Health*. London, Sage, 2002, p. 23.
8. Expression by LUSUARDI N., *La rivoluzione seriale. Estetica e drammaturgia nelle serie hospital*. Roma, Dino Audino, 2010.
9. From A. B.'s response to the questionnaire, completed on 08/12/2010 (my translation).
10. For a more detailed discussion of this point, cf. CAPPI V., *Pazienti e medici oltre lo schermo. Elementi per un'etnografia dei medical dramas*. Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2015; DAVIN S., *Urgences et ses spectateurs: la médecine dans le salon*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007.
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13. I have excluded from this list the TV series *Diagnosis: Murder*, broadcast that day on Rete 4 at 12 a.m.; though it is predominantly set in a hospital and its protagonist is a doctor, the show is commonly labelled and is recognisably a detective rather than medical drama. The show focuses on Dr Mark Sloan, who is dedicated to helping his police officer son to resolve murder cases, in the guise of a consultant for the police department.
14. Massimiano Bucchi in turn adapts the distinctions between categories proposed by PETERS H. P., *Mass Media as an Information Channel and Public Arena*. Risk: Health, Safety & Environment 1994; 5: 241-250.
15. BUCCHI M., *La salute e i mass media*. In: INGROSSO M. (ed.), *Comunicare la salute. Scenari, tecniche, progetti per il benessere e la qualità della vita*. Milano, Franco Angeli, 2001, p. 89 (my translation).
16. MAZZOLENI G., SFARDINI A., *Politica Pop. Da "Porta a Porta" a "L'isola dei famosi"*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009, p. 47 (my translation).
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18. VICARELLI G. (ed.), *Il paradigma perduto? Medici nel Duemila*. Milano, Franco Angeli, 2004, p. 11 (my translation).
19. According to Ingrosso, "the biggest effect of this "doing culture" has been the objectification of the body, the classification of our needs, the measurement

Two days in the tv-clinic

- of risks. Doing demands an object of the action, which absorbs its impact and gives value to the effect. The agent and cause must produce results, potentially measurable but certainly effective, useful, beneficial results" (INGROSSO M., see note 17, my translation).
20. Alexandra Brewis writes: "People can be time poor, as well as money poor; awareness of this phenomenon is important in thinking about associations between income, poverty, and obesity-risk. [...] Where people have sedentary or fixed-location jobs with long, inflexible hours, time poverty can be a real problem for both eating and exercising. Families in poverty tend to face the most difficult tradeoffs, because their choices are often so comparatively limited" (BREWIS A., *Obesity: Cultural and Biocultural Perspectives*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2011, p. 69).
 21. KELLEY J. M., KRAFT-TODD G., SCHAPIRA L., KOSSOWSKY J., RIESS H., *The Influence of the Patient-Clinician Relationship on Health-care Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials*. PlosOne 2014; 9: 94207.
 22. From an interview with M. S., general practitioner, 64 years old, carried out on 04/03/2014 at his clinic, in Bologna (my translation).
 23. As the series continues, we discover that the doctors and the interns, in order to survive the grievances of the world they inhabit every day, begin to take care of each other.
 24. JECKER N. S., SELF D. J., *Separating Care and Cure: An Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Images of Nursing and Medicine*. The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy 1991; 16: 293.
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 26. STRAUMAN E. C., GOODIER B. C., see note 25, p. 36.
 27. Source: Eurodata TV Worldwide, *House is the World's Most Popular TV show*. Agence France Presse, June 12 2009.
 28. GRASSO A., *Buona maestra: perché i telefilm sono diventati più importanti del cinema e dei libri*. Milano, Mondadori, 2007, p. 146 (my translation).
 29. SCIBILIA G., *Spacciare la medicina nera per la bianca. Doctor House e la medicalizzazione*. Aut Aut 2008; 340: 174 (my translation).
 30. *House* embodies the modern (late 19th, early 20th century) approach to medicine, precisely in the way it is described by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*. For a lengthier comparison between the two images of medical

- practice, see CAPPI V., *Pazienti e medici oltre lo schermo. Elementi per un'etnografia dei medical dramas*. Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2015.
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 32. The episode is the tenth of the fifth season, entitled “Let Them Eat Cake”.
 33. We might note that in this case, the patient demands care from the doctors, but when the responsibility for her health falls back to her, she opts for pharmaceutical treatment (a cure) rather than taking care of her own body, by adopting a different diet. This corroborates the suggestion that a cure is often a “convenient” solution, that frees the interested parties from having to face up to the most difficult and intimate aspects of the condition of sufferance.
 34. JECKER N. S., SELF D. J., see note 24, p. 303.
 35. JECKER N. S., SELF D. J., see note 24, p. 295.
 36. JECKER N. S., SELF D. J., see note 24, p. 297.
 37. Saunders writes: “for medicine as an art, its chief and characteristic instrument must be human faculty. What aspects of the faculty matter? We are offered the ability to listen, to empathise, to inform, to maintain solidarity: for the doctor, in fact, to be part of the treatment” (SAUNDERS J., *The practice of medicine as an art and as science*. Medical Humanities 2000; 26: 18).
 38. SAUNDERS J., see note 37.
 39. SAUNDERS J., see note 37, p. 22.
 40. SAUNDERS J., see note 37, p. 22.
 41. THOMPSON J. B., *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Oxford, Polity Press, 1995, p. 177.

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Articoli/Articles

MIDWIFERY PROFESSION IN RUSSIA: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND EVERYDAY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

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SUMMARY

Development of caring professions in post-Socialist context rarely becomes subject of sociological research. Presented article addresses this issue by considering development of midwifery occupation in contemporary Russia. We study how social and political changes have influenced professional project of midwives after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Particular emphasis is put on the impact of recent institutional changes on daily work on midwives and renegotiation of doctor-midwife professional border at the level of everyday interactions. Findings of the research are based on analysis of secondary data on development of midwifery in Russia and on interviews with midwives from three Russian cities.

Healthcare occupations constitute a privileged subject of analysis for the sociology of professions. Since initial stages of the development of the discipline institutional arrangements and work practices characteristic to medicine have been seen as a model for a heterogeneous group of knowledge-based professions (teachers, accountants, IT specialists etc). Academic interest in caring professions has resulted in particular attention to paramedical specialists. In a number of researches midwives and nurses have exemplified a set of underestimated feminized occupations that are involved in routine care work and subordinated to the “classical” professions, which derive their

Key words: Midwifery care - Midwifery profession - Post-Soviet healthcare

authority from possession of abstract scientific expertise¹. Studies of doctor-nurse and doctor-midwife relations are used by sociologists to address diverse issues associated with constitutive features of caring professions, professional hierarchies and struggle of less prestigious occupations for professional autonomy².

Ability of some selected occupations (like medicine and law) to represent a whole variety of modern professions, all of whom are in very different employment situations, has been already questioned by sociologists³. Another line of critique, to which this article aims to contribute, is concerned with almost exclusive focus on paths that professional projects take in the US and Western Europe⁴.

Ways in which occupations are formed in other social and political circumstances bring a challenge to the Anglo-American concept of professionalism. Studies of Soviet and post-Soviet medicine have shown that doctors who work in this context do not fully comply with the image of autonomous professionals, capable to define the scope and conditions of their professional duties⁵. Development of caring professions in the region also significantly differs from the “Western” model. However, professional affairs of post-Soviet nurses, midwives and social workers remain a marginal research topic for social scientists⁶.

This article contributes to the corpus of studies on caring professions by analyzing professional project of Russian midwives. Most of sociological and anthropological works are focused on midwifery in North America and Western Europe. Considerably less attention is paid to position of midwives in the volatile political and institutional contexts of Central and Eastern European states.

How midwifery is constituted as an occupation in coexistence with rather weak medical profession and high level of reproductive healthcare politization? What impact do ongoing neo-liberal reforms of post-Socialist healthcare have on professionalization of midwives? These are the questions addressed in the article.

Midwifery profession in Russia

The article consists of three parts. In the first one theoretical framework of the research is discussed. The second part provides description of institutional organization of Russian midwifery and state socio-political interventions in the sphere. In the third section we refer to the micro-level of midwifery practice and examine how it is influenced by liberalization and marketization of post-Soviet health-care. The concluding remarks summarize research findings.

Research framework

Theoretical framework of the article rests on concepts drawn from two areas of social analysis: the sociology of professions and social policy studies. Following the approach employed in researches on midwifery in developed “Western” countries⁷, we will draw attention both to institutional level of organization of Russian healthcare system, and to micro-level conflicts and negotiations between actors in the maternity care domain.

Sociology of professions

In this article we approach a category “profession” from the viewpoint of neo-Weberians and identify it as an “exclusionary social closure in the marketplace sanctioned by the state”⁸. Such understanding rests on a picture of competitive world, where relations between different occupational groups are unequal (in terms of income, status and prestige) and where each of these groups struggles for professional autonomy and jurisdiction. Researchers consider modern doctors (mostly Northern American and British) to be an emblematic example of a group successful both in gaining monopoly over particular field of expertise, and in securing their dominance over less advantageous paramedical occupations⁹. Midwifery, which is central to this article, is typically portrayed as subordinate to medical profession. It is identified as an occupation complementary to obstetrics, with a rather limited range of professional tasks and lack of professional authority¹⁰.

Feminist scholars have challenged this view of the professions and professional hierarchies. On the one hand, it has been argued that at the level of everyday work boundaries between knowledge-based and caring professions can be contested and negotiated¹¹. On the other hand, comparative studies of maternity healthcare systems have shown that midwives can successfully mobilize parental groups and sometimes make alliances with the state in order to enhance their professional status¹². Thus, midwifery is not necessarily second to obstetrics. Relations between these two occupations are more nuanced and dependent on political, social and economic contexts.

It is worth noting that apart from developing professional projects occupational groups are responsive to organizational demands. According to recent scholarly revision of “professionalism”, even in the us the logic of professional conduct is no longer independent from the logics of the organization and the market. Emerging as well as established occupations face financial constraints and bureaucratic limitations¹³.

Social Policy Studies

As it has been mentioned above professional groups are not sealed in vacuum. Trends of their transformations are conditioned by cultural assumptions, scientific advancements, interplay of market forces, and state policy. The later becomes especially important in case of occupations related to maternity healthcare, which is one of the most politicized branches of medical care.

State social policy determines if births will be centralized in large hospitals or will preferably occur in settings of private homes; if costs of treatment will be fully covered by mandatory insurance or from the client’s pocket. Basing on data from developed countries, scholars have demonstrated that welfare regime influences design of maternity healthcare, and that different regimes have different consequences for occupational groups involved in healthcare provision.

Midwifery profession in Russia

Liberal welfare states (like UK and Canada) put an emphasis on cost-effectiveness of healthcare services and may support midwives as an occupational group that suits this principle better than doctors. Such states also frame the issue of maternity care in a more individualistic way, making women important as consumers. In socio-democratic welfare regimes (like Finland), on the contrary, government is concerned with equality between citizens and intervenes in maternity care in ways that limit marketization¹⁴.

Post-Socialist states fell beyond the scope of conventional classification of welfare regimes. They are believed to constitute a distinctive type of welfare regime¹⁵, which is ambiguously defined by scholars as “transitional”¹⁶. Question about the ways, in which this kind of welfare organization influences maternity care provision and corresponds (or not) to professional interests of midwives and doctors, poses a scholarly challenge.

Maternity healthcare in post-Soviet Russia: institutional arrangements

Many distinctive features of contemporary Russian maternity healthcare are inherited from the model that Soviet medicine took by 1960's. That model can be described as a centralized and bureaucratically administered system, which provided universally available, but low-standard medical services¹⁷. Strong state dominated the whole sphere of welfare provision and acted as the main stakeholder in the area of maternity care. Childbirth was treated as a public event related to the upbringing of new citizens, and authorities that were pursuing pronatalist goals used healthcare institutions to control women's reproductive behavior¹⁸.

Doctor-patient relations in this context took a form of triangle: doctor - patient - state¹⁹. Medical professionals, unlike their American counterparts, lacked control over conditions and content of their work. They acted more like bureaucrats deferred to public health authorities and

responsible for the transfer of state paternalistic care to the citizens. Furthermore, comparing to industrial production, work in health care was devalued in Soviet society. This resulted in ‘feminization’ of medical profession. Obstetrics and genecology (along with pediatrics) constituted the most indicative example of this trend. In early 1970’s number of women in these fields reached 90%²⁰.

At the same time, the state which was allied with doctors guaranteed medical dominance through regulations that gave preference to obstetrical care. There was no higher education in midwifery in the country or any pronounced attempts to develop midwifery science. Midwives were restricted to auxiliary work and actually functioned as obstetrical nurses, who were not allowed to attend deliveries without doctor’s supervision or to consult women during pregnancy and postpartum period. And that were doctors, not midwives, who bear legal responsibility for the quality and outcomes of medical interventions.

Structure of state maternity healthcare was presented by a two-tier system. Women’s clinics (*zhenskaya konsul’tatsiya*) provided services for gynecological patients and pregnant women, while birthing hospitals (*rodil’niy dom*) took care of births. Usually women’s clinics and birthing hospitals were structurally coordinated (some clinics were hospitals’ subdivisions). However, most of such coupled institutions were staffed with different personnel. Thus, during pregnancy women were typically consulted at a local clinic by a team consisted of an obstetrician-gynecologist and a midwife, who acted as his/her technical assistant. Their deliveries were also attended by an obstetrician and a midwife, but these were other people completely unknown to the patients.

Feminist authors have criticized this system for utilitarian attitude to female reproductive experiences, as it prevented any kind of continuous relationship between a woman and a caregiver (or a group of caregivers)²¹. But such division also had a negative impact on

midwives as a professional group. Fragmentation of maternity services led to the fragmentation of midwives' skills and knowledge, and split the midwifery profession.

The system was designed exclusively for hospital approach to maternity care. However, in early 1980's a homebirth movement began in the country. It was a marginal underground initiative framed by its' members as an attempt to escape from extensive state intervention in private family experiences²². Ideology of the movement differed from ideology of 'Western' midwifery and patients' movements in two crucial ways. First, as the vast majority of Russian obstetricians were women, no opposition was constructed between a male-doctor and a female-midwife²³ Devalued position of medical profession in state healthcare actually made some obstetricians to join the movement along with midwives. Second, technologization of childbirth and extensive medical control over it were not the main targets of the critique articulated by Soviet homebirth proponents. Movement's agenda was grounded in parental discontent with low quality of medical services and state bureaucratic control over child bearing and childrearing.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 Russian health-care experienced a chain of reforms aimed at reconstruction of its institutions according to neo-liberal and market principles. System of health insurance was introduced. State expenditures on health-care were cut down, but the government allowed for private medical practice and for provision of commercial medical services in state hospitals and clinics.

Reforms proved to be rather inconsistent; the structure of health-care system remained unchanged and the level of bureaucratic control over medical domain continued to be high. Along with official market of medical services briberies and informal payments thrived. Semi-legal practices became acceptable option both for low-paid professionals, and for patients who wanted to experience personalized approach and to receive care of better quality²⁴.

Commercialization and liberalization of healthcare created a window of opportunity for those midwives who aimed at gaining more professional autonomy. The system of state medicine, which put emphasis on obstetrical care, continued to be the main provider of maternity care services in the country. Midwives still were not officially allowed to attend deliveries independently. But in the changed situation healthcare institutions became interested in the development of commercial services that would answer to the demands of those wealthy clients, who wanted to make informed decisions about childbirth (including the choice of child-birth assistant).

One of such services introduced in hospitals was a so-called “individual delivery”, in the frame of which a woman was able to choose an obstetrician and a midwife, who would help her during labour. In some hospitals women, who opted for “individual delivery”, could decide to give birth with a midwife alone, with a doctor being nearby in case of emergency.

In 1997 in St. Petersburg a unique center for midwifery care was created as a commercial subdivision of the state hospital²⁵. In the same decade a number of private “parenting schools” (mostly in Moscow and St. Petersburg) were set up. These schools shared “natural”, demedicalized view on childbirth and promoted midwifery help. Officially, they were only allowed to teach courses to expectant parents. In fact, some state birthing hospitals had informal agreements with parenting schools; so midwives, who led the courses, were able to assist their clients’ deliveries.

Another alternative to the conventional childbirth scenario was home birth attended by a midwife. In late 1990’s it was steadily developing from a marginal practice into business²⁶. Homebirths were not literally prohibited in the country, but neither midwives, nor obstetricians could receive license for this kind of service. Professionals who had joined this practice did it at their own risk.

One can evidence that in the volatile context of post-Soviet health-care transformations spots of growth of midwifery autonomy have emerged. This was possible because of the legalization of private business and interest of hospitals' administrations in offering new medical services that would attract solvent clients. Unsteady institutional context of the healthcare under reform, paradoxically, also has had a positive impact on strengthening the position of midwives. Changing and uncertain official rules contributed to widening the room for negotiations between clients, obstetricians and midwives; even some illegal practices (for e.g., homebirths, informal payments to hospital obstetricians for not attending the delivery) became acceptable.

These transformations have expanded the gap between hospital midwives and midwives who worked at women's clinics. For the former developing market of childbirth services brought new professional opportunities, while the later preserved their position of doctors' technical assistants. Another demarcation line has been drawn between hospital midwives, who strictly followed official prescriptions concerning their occupation, and those, who ventured to transgress the norms and to launch a center for midwifery care or to participate in home delivery. Work of the second group did not fully fit in the state regulations, but these midwives exercised more professional autonomy.

In mid 2000's another stage of the development of Russian maternity healthcare begun. It can be described in terms of restoration of extensive state control over the sphere and its subsequent politicization. This trend reflected pronatalist policy orientation, when the authorities concerned with low birthrates searched for the solution for the "demographic crisis"²⁷. Technological and assessable obstetrical and gynecological services were considered to be one of the answers to the problem. Thus, while the general trend in healthcare organization was characterized by the departure from affluent socialist social

provision to a means-tested model, pregnant women and mothers enjoyed introduction of new forms of state support. Authorities tried to make reproductive healthcare services available and free of charge for almost all categories of women, regardless their working and insurance status or place of residence.

In 2006 authorities started a priority national project “Healthcare”. In the frame of this initiative maternity healthcare institutions received additional funding from the state, their technical facilities were ameliorated; more than 20 maternal hospitals equipped with the most advanced medical technique were built in the country. In the same year the birth certificate program was launched. It was aimed at introduction of competitive principle in maternity healthcare provision. Through the mechanism of financial stimulation hospitals, clinics and particular doctors should have become interested in attracting more clients and in providing care of better quality for each patient.

State campaign against informal payments in healthcare was initiated. Law enforcement authorities strengthened control over medical institutions in the frame of regular reviews²⁸. In 2005 a campaign against home births was launched. It consisted of legal cases against those midwives, who attended home deliveries, and of media campaign that emphasized risks and dangers of this type of childbirth²⁹. In the following section we focus on this later stage and consider the impact of socio-political changes on daily work of Russian hospital midwives and their professional perspectives.

Daily negotiations of Russian midwives

Research data and method

In this part of the article we concentrate on daily work of those Russian midwives, who attend deliveries, as this segment of midwifery service constitutes the main site of transformations of the profession. We

briefly consider micro-level of obstetrician-midwife interactions and trace influence of institutional reforms on professional hierarchies. Our attention is focused on ‘ordinary’ midwives, who work in state birthing hospitals, and ‘alternative’ midwives, who initiate independent commercial projects.

Empirical data for the study was collected in 2013-2014. Altogether 15 interviews with hospital midwives were conducted in the cities of Kazan, St. Petersburg and Volgograd. Nearly half of the interviews ($N=7$) were conducted with personnel of the centre of midwifery care in St. Petersburg, which is one of the most successful Russian examples of midwife-led birth being implemented within the settings of the a medical institution.

Alongside interviews we use data collected through participant observation at four Midwifery Today conferences that took place in Moscow in 2010, 2011, 2013 and in St. Petersburg in 2015. These conferences were devoted to discussion of “natural” childbirth issues and the legalization of midwifery.

Hospital midwives

According to the regulations of Russian Ministry of healthcare³⁰ a midwife is subordinated to a doctor, and scope of her professional duties is limited to auxiliary work. Her responsibilities are restricted: for instance, she is not allowed to perform vaginal examination, or to sew perinael tears. At the micro-level of routine day-to-day work, hierarchy of professional relations is less obvious, and boundaries between obstetricians and midwives are less refined. Members of both occupational groups have a pragmatic task before them; they are to help their patient at labour and to secure her and her child’s health. Thus, similarly to other medical subdivisions that deal with emergency cases³¹, in maternity care team-work is a crucial compound of efficient professional performance; a compound, which frequently becomes more important than boundary work.

In Russian birthing hospitals obstetricians and midwives, who work in delivery wards, normally are not combined into stable teams. They form temporary dyads depending on their work schedule. However, the situation is different in case of commercial ‘individual delivery’, when the patient can choose birth attendants in advance. Both midwives and doctors usually have particular preferences concerning possible members of the team. So if the woman-client chooses an obstetrician, the later recommends her to opt for a particular midwife, whom the doctor finds convenient to work with (and vice versa in rare cases when a woman wants to have a midwife-led birth).

Nowadays ‘individual delivery’ is a widespread service in Russian state hospitals in big cities and a substantial source of income for medical staff. Thus, ability to establish good relations and mutual understanding with a highly competent counterpart, who shares one’s assumptions about childbirth, is valuable for both midwives and obstetricians. Midwives who have participated in the research describe this process in terms of ‘finding contact’ and ‘attuning to each other’. This is a non-verbal tacit work. In the context of officially recognized medical dominance, success of this work highly depends on obstetrician’s willingness to accept a midwife as a fellow colleague, and not just as a technical assistant.

The way in which routine work is organized in Russian birthing hospitals also contributes to the development of trust and cooperation between doctors and midwives. An obstetrician typically is not presented at the delivery ward during all stages of labour. He/she comes from time to time to monitor the situation and attends only the final phase of the delivery. At all the other moments it is a midwife, who seats by the birthing woman, helps her to breathe through the contractions, offers different facilities to ease her condition etc³². And it is a midwife, who should call for an obstetrician, if some urgent intervention in labour process is required. One of the interviewees describes situation as follows.

It depends on his [doctor's] personality, if you will be his assistant or his counterpart [...] However, judging from my own rather limited experience it is mostly a supportive cooperation. An obstetrician trusts a midwife, because his office is at another floor, and he comes to the delivery ward, checks if everything is alright and goes back to his office. And if something goes wrong while he is absent it is a midwife who should notice (midwife, 33 years old, St. Petersburg, 2014)

However, situational configuration of doctor-midwife relation is determined not just by their common task to provide efficient help to a patient, but also by the bureaucratic requirements that limit midwife's autonomy. Obstetrician is the specialist legally accountable for the delivery: he/she is to fill in all the documentation regarding particular birth, he/she should also justify in a daily report actions accomplished by medical personnel during the delivery. This report should show that an obstetrician has fulfilled all the instructions and followed all the formalized schemes set by the Ministry of health-care and adopted by the birthing hospital. Midwife's independent work is not presupposed by those regulations.

We don't have that many doctors, who can fully trust a midwife, like "you can do anything you want during the delivery". Such situation is almost impossible, because they have this persistent question in mind: "And how will I describe this delivery in my daily report?" (midwife, 37 years old, St. Petersburg, 2014)

Midwives who have experience of work at late-Soviet period put an emphasis on the changes that were provoked in healthcare by liberal reforms. They consider that these changes contribute to the diminishing of the midwife's role in hospital labour. As we have already described above, authority of a midwife rests on negotiations with a doctor, on the situational balance of responsibilities that professionals have achieved. But in the context of healthcare liberalization and restoration of state control over the maternity care, adherence

to official rules and formal distribution of responsibilities becomes more and more prominent. Thus, relational logic of care³³ is being replaced at birthing hospitals by the logic of law, which is not in midwives' favor.

The chief obstetrician of our subdivision... in 1986 she provided midwives with more... well, I would say, she encouraged us to work with women [...] And now we have this new trend that doctors have withdrawn patients from us, they have taken all the responsibility for themselves. But I understand why this is happening; not because they do not trust midwives, but because patients have become very competent. For every minor mistake, for every flaw they complain to the authorities (midwife, 48 years old, Volgograd, 2014).

According to midwives' accounts, recent institutional transformations have contributed not only to the shift towards formalization of professional responsibilities, but also to the increase of medical interventions in labour. From obstetricians' point of view (as it is re-translated by midwives), birth with extensive medical intervention is a more controlled one. So if an ambiguous and potentially hazardous situation occurs in labour, doctor would normally opt for C-section rather than rely on uncertain outcome of 'natural' birth. This trend indirectly weakens midwives' professional position. Deliveries become more medicalized and thus fall within the sphere of specific obstetrical competence.

This began five or six years ago. Women started to complain about maternity healthcare services [...] And I do pity doctors. Most of them are for natural childbirth, yes, our whole maternity hospital is for natural childbirth. But, for example, we have a woman for whom Caesarian section is recommended, and she doesn't want to have a Caesarian. So a doctor has to decide between natural delivery and an operation. He would prefer to have a natural delivery and a healthy baby. But who knows what will happen? If anything will go wrong during labor, this very woman will sue him. So of course he chooses to perform an operation (midwife, 48 years old, Kazan, 2014).

'Alternative' midwives

Feminist scholars have shown that in Western Europe and, especially, in the US midwifery movement originated from critique of medicalization of childbirth experience and excessive control of male-dominated medical profession over practices of both midwives and women-clients³⁴. In Russia, as it has been described in previous part of the article, midwifery occupation has developed in a quite different context, where the main issue for healthcare professionals and for parents is extensive state intervention in the sphere of reproduction. Consequentially, in discourses on midwifery professionalization a critique of state healthcare system plays more prominent role than a critique of medical science and doctors as its representatives. This is particularly true for 'alternative' midwives, who are evading official regulations in their practice. They portray state birthing hospitals as "factories" and "assembly lines" that deprive childbirth experience of its genuine privacy and intimacy. Doctors, hospital midwives and their patients are represented as hostages of 'the system'. This aversive image is contrasted with the image of emotionally involved midwifery care. The midwife, who runs one of Moscow's parenting schools and assists at home deliveries, provides in her conference presentation a good example of this kind of judgment.

So you can have a birth that will be full of love and joy or a birth that will be full of pain and suffering. So you are to decide. However, our doctors rarely allow you to decide, because our maternity hospitals function as factories, like machines that just follow particular schemes (midwife35, Moscow, 2011).

Correspondingly, hospital midwives, who have turned to a more autonomous professional practice (at midwifery care centers, parenting schools, or while attending home births), explain this decision by their unwillingness to work at an 'assembly line', where one have to attend up to 13 deliveries a day³⁶. Present head of the Rainbow center for midwifery care describes how the organization was founded.

And people were coming and saying: “I also want to attend deliveries of those women whom I am acquainted with”. And if to put it bluntly, that meant “I don’t want to work at an assembly line anymore. I’m fed up with feeling myself an industrial worker. I want to take at least partial responsibility for what I’m doing”. So that’s the way the center was organized. There wasn’t anyone, who would proclaim: “And now we will found a center, where mothers and babies will be treated with full respect”. No, we were driven by a totally egoistic motif (midwife, 52 years old, St. Petersburg, 2013).

Midwives assume that those women who choose ‘alternative’ midwifery services want to escape typical childbirth scenario predefined for them at state birthing hospitals. These women-clients rarely see the difference between medical and midwifery professional responsibilities. They just want to avoid depersonalized attitude from hospital staff and to minimize effects of hospital ‘machinery’ that insists on following formal rules despite patients’ actual wishes and needs.

Many women they are looking for a person, who will protect them from the system. And I think that some women choose home births for exactly the same reason, they just want to find someone who will protect them (midwife, 35 years old, St. Petersburg, 2014).

Recent strengthening of formal healthcare regulations coupled with state campaign against home births negatively influenced such midwives’ initiatives as parenting schools and centers for midwifery care. Even those organizations, which were not related to illegal home birth practice, felt administrative pressure for being an ‘alternative’ to the official maternity care system. It became difficult for them to negotiate conditions of their work with obstetricians and hospital administration. For instance, in 2014 the center for midwifery care had to move from one hospital, with which it was associated for 17 years, to another. Here is a fragment from an interview with one of the center’s midwives.

And we are losing all our achievements now, because it is so difficult to find a like-minded person among doctors... Our statistics shows that we have the best delivery outcomes in the city, but no one cares. I don't know why. It may sound harsh, but they think we are a gang of swindlers. Someone even calls us the Cradle37. By referring to "them" I mean our local public health authorities (midwife, 48 years old, St. Petersburg, 2014).

To sum up in mid 2000's both groups of Russian midwives, who attend deliveries, have faced a sudden shrinking of their professional jurisdiction on the practical level. Marketization of healthcare services in 1990's and unsteady transforming context of medical practice contributed to the development of midwives' professional project. However, in a decade the state, which continued to be the main stakeholder at the sphere of healthcare provision, strengthened official control over maternity care and introduced socio-political measures to support medicalized obstetrical approach to childbirth. Midwives' professional initiatives that thrived on insecure ground of personal negotiations, semi-legal schemes of care provision and temporary lucrative interests of hospital administrations faced major obstacle on the way of their development.

Conclusion

Formation of welfare states and dramatic changes in gender order which occur in modern societies have led to institutionalization of care practices and have provided a basis for jurisdictional claims of caring professions. Midwives are one of the indicative professional groups, who ground their claims for professional authority by the reference to committed care that they provide to their clients. In this paper we have considered professional project of post-Soviet midwifery that rarely becomes a subject of the sociology of professions. The very nature of care conditions the specificity of professionalization of occupations related to this social phenomenon. Care practices and relations are situational, local, oriented toward wellbeing of particular others. They do not fully fit neither market logic nor the universalistic

logic of contract responsibilities³⁸, although being determined by both of them. Thus, it is crucial to consider two levels of development of caring profession - macro level of social and political arrangements, and micro level of routine daily work at maternity hospitals.

Dissolution of Socialist regime and its aftermath was associated with the reshaping of Russian healthcare system. The resulting model resembles Finnish model of maternity care provision, which is characterized by the strong state pursuing universalistic welfare policy and undermining autonomy of professional groups (both midwives and obstetricians) in favor of state authorities.³⁹ However, unlike the Finnish case, in Russia female reproductive experiences and maternity care services are heavily politicized, and there is less concern about women-friendly politics or feminist agenda. Another distinctive feature of the organization of Russian maternity care is incoherence of its regulations, as the government attempted to introduce neoliberal and market principles in the work of otherwise unchanged healthcare institutions.

On the micro level of healthcare provision these incoherencies and contradictions have developed into a number of semi-legal practices (bribes and other kinds of informal payments). However, these unsettled order provided the room for ground-level professional initiatives of midwives aimed at practical renegotiation of the border between obstetrical and midwifery duties.

Our data shows that in the satiation when the state supports medicalized approach to childbirth, the ability to achieve some extent of professional autonomy at micro-level is crucial for the development of the profession. This process can be facilitated or, on the contrary, restricted by wider socio-political context. During the first decade of liberalization of Russian healthcare, midwives had better position for negotiations with doctors and hospital administration. Restoration of extensive state control over the reproductive health in mid 2000's has weakened midwives' standpoint and limited further development of midwifery autonomy.

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Articoli/Articles

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NURSING PROFESSION IN ITALY: FROM CARE TO CURE OR A DIFFERENT FORM OF CARE?

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SUMMARY

The nursing profession in Italy has undergone significant changes over the past 20 years, especially after a series of reforms that have transformed work in the health field. In this framework, the basic principle of nursing, which is to “care”, tends to integrate with forms of “cure” in the medical sense and to develop new forms of care in specialized fields. Starting from this premise, this paper aims to analyze the evolution of the nursing profession in Italy towards new models of nursing care, in particular by using some data collected in the Second National Survey on Nursing by the Centre of Excellence for Nursing Scholarship Ipasvi in 2013. The aim of this work is to demonstrate how the new professionalized nurses developed new forms of care, and new nurses’ roles for Italy such as the family nurse or the specialist nurse. However, the practical application of these new models of nursing care in Italy seems to be delayed by an ingrained medical dominance that, sometimes, tends to replace itself in mutant forms.

Introduction

Throughout the 21st Century, the transformation of national health care systems was a global mandate in accountability to quality, affordable and sustainable healthcare. For example, patient safety¹ improvements and the adoption of evidence-based practice² sparked changes that transformed the “culture” of how and by whom health

Key words: Nursing profession - Care - Cure - Medical dominance

care was delivered. Underscoring these cultural shifts were the disciplinary reformations, particularly evident in nursing in the United States and in other advanced countries such as Italy fueling changes in health care environments globally.

In Italy, in the 1990s, the Decree of the Ministry of Health 739/1994 (called Professional Profile)³ provided the first recognition of a level of professional autonomy of nurses in Italy. Other laws followed that officially ratified nursing professional autonomy⁴ and established key competencies. A significant outcome was the introduction of a single training/educational pathway for nurses via a 3-year university degree instituted in 2001⁵. In 2004, the first Masters' degrees in nursing science were realized and in 2006-2007, the first doctoral programs in nursing were offered at four universities in Italy with support from the National Regulatory Board of Nursing (Ipasvi)⁶. Nursing's transformation in Italy is most evident by the broadened scope of practice and higher status of the nursing profession nationwide, prompted by the Regulatory Board of Nursing Ipasvi.

As we stated before, the nursing profession in Italy has undergone significant changes over the past 20 years, especially after a series of reforms that have transformed work in the health field. A work characterized by tasks exclusively devoted to the care of a patient, to a health profession in the wide sense, with skills, autonomy and specific responsibilities. In this evolutionary framework, the basic principle of nursing, which is to "take care" or "to care" of people in sickness and in health, seems to be integrated by forms of "cure" in the medical sense or better to embed some forms of cure (forms of advanced care, drug therapy) in the responsibilities and competences of nurses. This fact goes in a direction of crossing old cultural models linked to the dominance of a single profession (medicine) and is favoured by the increase of technical and diagnostic capabilities, acquired either through new paths of university education, started in

Italy with the reforms of 1990s, or with new programs of social and health integration, following the crisis of the welfare state systems⁷. Starting from this premise, this paper aims to analyze the evolution of the nursing profession in Italy towards new models of nursing care, in particular by using some of the data collected in the Second National Survey on Nursing by Ipasvi in 2013. We will try to demonstrate how the new fuzzy professional nurses⁸ integrate particular forms of cure to forms of care, also more specific than ever before. However, at the same time, the practical application of this new model of nursing care in Italy, with less rigid medical boundaries, still seems to be hampered and delayed by strong cultural, but also organizational and institutional factors.

While considerable progress has been made by the nursing profession in Italy, any unknown and possibly destabilizing effects have not been identified in a systematic way at this juncture. Additionally, the impact of changes relative to the dimensions and characteristics of nurses' cultural experiences, within the evolutionary process of their discipline, has yet to be explored. Therefore, this study was conceptualized to capture nurses' experiences after a first period of relevant changes of Italian nursing. In this framework, the aim of the study was to explore nurses' perceptions of their own professional cultural reformation in terms of dimensions, characteristics, features, issues and possibilities within the current Italian National Health System.

Definition and evolution of care and cure in the health professions

Before examining some data of the Second National Survey on Nursing presented here, it is useful to specify the differences between care and cure highlighted in the literature⁹ and, particularly, to focus on the way they apply to nursing practice.

The task of curing the sick derives from the set of medical and scientific knowledge and is therefore based on the principles of universality,

rationality, emotional neutrality, while the activity of caring comes from much more uncertain and varied knowledge, largely based on interpersonal, relational, psychological, emotional and aesthetic skills¹⁰. An important aspect to consider is that the nursing profession, since it has among its basic principles the “care” or “take care” of people in health and disease, more than the “cure” in the medical sense, can be seen as a profession of “service” to the person, like others in the same orientation in other fields; for example, the teacher or the social worker¹¹. This makes nursing different from other health professions and therefore perhaps more difficult to place in a specific area¹². A specific characteristic of the nursing profession, even compared to other health professions, consists, therefore, in putting on the field, in the relationship with the patients and their families, not only technical skills, but also human and social skills. This is probably an opportunity, but sometimes an impediment to the full recognition of the social role and professionalism of nurses in the medical dominated world.

Today the activities of a nurse vary from performances that require high technical skills (as in the case of nurses working in surgery or intensive care or operating rooms) to activities where are required few technical skills but much more human and relational abilities (such as in geriatric or palliative care). Such duplicity and, in a sense, deep paradoxical nature of the nursing profession, has meant that historically nursing has been placed in an intermediate position between the medical profession and the role of the support worker¹³. For this reason, in Italy, as in many other advanced countries, it has been tried to raise the level of education of nurses, through specific legislative reforms, leaving the less qualified tasks to occupations with a lower professional profile.

Another problem that involves the transformations of the traditional nursing care concerns the reforms of the Italian health system. Since the ‘90s the process of managerialism led to manage the public sector

by adopting forms of business administration, creating the so-called *new management*¹⁴. The implementation of managerialism over the years has also affected the autonomy of certain categories (particularly doctors), breaking their professional identity and limiting the medical dominance¹⁵ through the reallocation of tasks based on a logic of efficiency¹⁶. Moreover, patients in recent years have gained increased awareness and decision-making power in their own care processes, contributing to the enhancement of more “relational” forms of assistance and personalized care¹⁷.

Following this reorganization of the Italian health system, the activities of the nurse have incorporated many organizational and administrative skills, as well as some competencies of the medical profession, with growing responsibilities. It has been demonstrated that the caring activities of nurses are very important for the health outcomes, and in some cases they are more significant than curing¹⁸.

From care to cure or the reverse?

The survey, on which we present here only some of the results, was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of research with the support of the Centre of Excellence for Nursing Scholarship of Ipasvi Rome, who coordinated the research with the collaboration of the National Ipasvi Regulatory Board.

The survey involved approximately 3900 nurses from all over Italy and was carried out through a structured questionnaire, divided into seven sections, each containing questions about a topic considered relevant to understand and deepen the various problems faced by the nursing profession nowadays:

The sections of the questionnaire were (totally 58 questions):

- Section 1: Profession and working environment;
- Section 2: Transculturality and health;

- Section 3: Working conditions;
- Section 4: Nursing and e-Health;
- Section 5: Pathways of assistance and of social-health integration;
- Section 6: Education;
- Section 7: Sociodemographic data.

Due to reasons of cost and organization, the research team decided to adopt a method of non-probability sampling; in this case a sample of convenience, based on available and more accessible respondents¹⁹.

General data

The 74% of the sample were female nurses, while the 26% were male nurses. This confirms the distribution of nurses at a national level.

Tab. 1 – Gender and age of the sample (freq. %).

<i>Gender</i>	
Male	26,2
Female	73,8
<i>Ages</i>	
Up to 34	20,6
35-44	34,2
45-54	36,4
Over 55	8,8

The 37.7% of respondents possessed the nursing diploma, that was no more available since 1996 with the introduction of a university diploma and later on, in 2001, with the introduction of the degree in nursing. This percentage, in fact, is greatly reduced with the decreasing age of nurses surveyed.

The evolution from care to cure in the Italian nursing profession

The nurses who owned a post bachelor degree were about 25% of the sample.

Tab.2 – Educational qualification for ages (freq. %).

	<i>Up to 34 years</i>	<i>35-44</i>	<i>45-54</i>	<i>over 55</i>
Regional Diploma	1,5	40,1	51,3	58,4
University Diploma	8,7	11,8	7,5	9,4
Bachelor Degree	70,0	23,4	10,7	6,0
Post Bachelor Degree	19,8	24,7	30,5	26,2

Using the data of this survey we tried to focus on the following general hypothesis:

Although in the nursing profession is evident the blurring and hybridization of care and cure, this fact does not seem yet to be fully perceived and experienced by Italian nurses because of organizational and institutional delays of the Italian health system, but also due to a kind of cultural lag of the Italian nursing profession.

From this sample we will analyze some of the findings of the survey, which will focus on the following assumptions:

1. The new skills and areas of employment of nursing highlight a crossing of the traditional distinction between the activities of care and the activities of cure.
2. This crossing seems not yet be fully perceived by Italian nurses for different reasons: due to the organization of the Italian health system and to a general cultural backwardness of the nursing profession.

New competences of Italian nurses

Thirty years ago the nursing profession had an homogeneous identity, also in the general public perception. The nurse was

perceived as a figure in charge of performing manual tasks specifically addressed to the assistance of sick people. Although this corresponded only partially to the true activities, in the eyes of patients, nurses professional identity consisted essentially in this²⁰. Our survey showed a different picture and an evolution in a relational way of the epistemological core of the caring activities and of this identity.

Tab. 3 – In the performance of your profession, how much importance you assign to the following aspects (1= not important; 5= very important) (freq.%).

		1	2	3	4	5	
a. Technical and scientific	<i>Not important</i>	1,3	2,7	12,1	27,3	56,6	<i>Very important</i>
b. Management	<i>Not important</i>	1,1	2,6	11,0	28,0	57,3	<i>Very important</i>
c. Relational	<i>Not important</i>	0,7	1,4	6,5	16,9	74,4	<i>Very important</i>
d. Educational	<i>Not important</i>	0,7	1,5	8,8	21,4	67,6	<i>Very important</i>

From the Tab. 3, it can be noticed that the most of respondents believes that the relational aspects are very important (74,4%) as well as the educational ones (67,6%). Trying to explaining this data, we can consider a nurse who has adopted the principles defined in the professional profile of 1994 and the code of ethics of nursing in 2009, in which is described the deep nature of nursing. The relational dimension, which consist of interpretational, emotional and communicative skills with patients and caregivers, has become a prominent feature in the nursing field. Through this relationship, in fact, the nurses are able to pursue humanistic and emphatic objectives, while conveying their professional values²¹.

Despite the good result of the above mentioned question, if we look at Table 4, we can see that the management aspect of the nursing profession is still poorly evaluated in the health system.

The evolution from care to cure in the Italian nursing profession

Tab. 4 – In your view, in which measure the nurse has tools for: (%).

	<i>None</i>	<i>Few</i>	<i>Enough</i>	<i>Many</i>	<i>Many more</i>
a. To guide policies and the development of the workplace	23,0	46,5	18,7	8,8	3,0
b. To ensure the respect for the rights of the assisted patient	3,9	19,9	32,5	28,5	15,3
c. To enhance his professional role	6,1	26,3	27,1	23,0	17,5
d. To manage the available economic resources	23,0	36,8	20,6	13,5	6,1
e. To manage the available human resources	14,3	33,3	24,7	18,0	9,7

The majority of respondents felt that they had few tools to guide policies and the development of their own workplace environments (46,5%), as well as to manage the available economic resources (36,8%) and human ones (33,3%). The nurses were aware, however, to have enough instruments to ensure respect for the rights of the persons (32,5%) and to enhance their professional role (27,1%). These results may suggest a situation where nurses are not able to make decisions on the reorganization of services and health structures. The awareness of having enough tools to enhance their role, however, could be considered an element of strength and empowerment of nursing profession.

The tools that can be used today by nurses are different and based on increasing skills, which, put into practice, can be exploited for many activities of prevention, diagnosis and cure. We can consider, as an example, all nursing activities that may reduce the occurrence of hospital infections, medication errors, incorrect living habits.

In our survey, the perception to have these instruments for such activities is more relevant in younger nurses, as well as in those with higher level of education. This reveal an important trend of major involvement for the future generation of nurses.

We can say that, despite the rise in education, the advancements of skills and the recognition of nursing as a profession, the role of responsibility of nurses is still not enough considered, even if it is becoming increasingly central to support different health structures for patients and family members. Faced with these problems, it seems, however, that (perhaps a bit paradoxically) nurses today have strengthened even more than before their intrinsic motivation, because they believe in their work and have a very clear professional mission, based on the principle of taking care of people assisted²².

Toward new forms of nursing assistance

Another issue of great importance is the role of the nurse in contexts outside the hospital, where the decision-making, the autonomy and the skills of nurses can be put in practice more easily.

In the early 2000s, the outpatient care required more experienced nurses, especially in the case of home care, which represented one of the strategies for the change of the Italian health system. Today nurses are much more aware that their actions are not only based on professional care activities inside hospitals, but also outside the traditional nosocomial setting. In this sense, in recent years there has been a continuous reorganization and rationalization of the health system: many hospitals were reduced, many Health Centres and Houses of Health were opened for a better follow-up of people and continuity of care and alternative structures for the diagnosis and treatment such as day services or day surgeries or wards led by nurses were promoted and encouraged²³.

These innovative structures, more functional to the needs of the population and to the rationalization of health expenditure, would seem to suggest also a change of the nurses' work.

To tell the truth, if we observe the data of our survey, the expected change is just at the beginning. The data show that the majority of nurses still work in hospitals or local health authorities, though,

more than in the past, there seems to be a greater awareness of the importance of developing district nursing care, at least for the three main areas of the social-health integration:

1. family health nursing;
2. nursing homes;
3. nursing home care.

The general interest for these kind of social-health integration paths consists in the fact that these new pathways are able both to reduce the cost of treatment, and to increase the acceptability of care for many chronic patients.

Tab. 5 – Compared to non-hospital nursing care, which of the following activities would be important to develop? (1= not important; 5= very important) (freq.%).

	<i>I = Not important</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5 =Very important</i>
To spread the family nurse on the territory	0,9	2,4	7,5	19,3	69,9
To increase Nursing Health Centres	0,7	1,7	7,8	21,0	68,8
To develop Integrated Home Care	0,6	1,2	5,9	19,7	72,7
To strengthen the role of the nurse as a case manager (nurse who provides and coordinates care for individualized clinical management from admission to discharge)	0,8	2,7	9,1	22,2	65,2
To develop multidisciplinary team working	0,3	1,2	7,0	21,3	70,2

In particular, one of the areas that seems more innovative is the primary care and family nursing, already widely used in many countries. In Italy, this area is still to be fully developed, because the family nurse, for example, is still seen as a mysterious object and hindered by old hierarchical logic of rigid boundaries among health disciplines²⁴. Instead, the main aim of this figure is the development of alternative methods of care, consistent with the new health needs of the population (e.g. the increase of chronic degenerative diseases, related to population aging)²⁵.

Nurses are becoming more aware of the role of the family nurses in order to guarantee the continuity of care. Not surprisingly, about 90% of the nurses surveyed believed that it was very important to spread the figure of the family nurse in Italy.

Among other pathways of social-health integration, the Health Centres have increased the interest of both the health system and health care organizations, but still have not fully developed throughout the country. While there are several of these Centres on a regional level, this path does not have a defined pattern so far, more or less for similar causes to the implementation role of the family nurse, that is, a strong desire not to change well established realities. For these reasons, these Health Centres are spreading very slowly and with different and often underestimated outcomes from place to place. Also in this case, however, the nurses are conscious of their potential relevance, having never been able to apply their professional skills in this type of service.

Finally, the home care is not a novelty in the Italian context. In fact, it was already applied, even if in a fragmented way, in the late '90s. Today, however, we speak of Integrated Home Care in a new sense²⁶, because in this new model the nurse is able to offer benefits and services, including those highly technical and specialized, directly at patient's home. In this area, is becoming strategic and of particular importance the integration and collaboration among

different members of the healthcare team (doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.) who take care of the patient through a more collaborative and shared work. For this reason, in our survey the sample of respondents identified Integrated Home Care as important in the 92% of cases.

Compared to fifteen years ago, the pathways of social-health integration have become most topical and relevant. However, the reality that emerges is not yet comforting. The practice of these pathways, unfortunately, is still very limited and does not follow defined and shared nationwide models.

In our survey the importance of this kind of services does not seem to be related to the work of nurses who responded. In fact, crossing the data, we do not notice any significant difference between the opinion of nurses working in district areas, and nurses working inside hospitals.

But how many of our respondents who recognized the importance of the development of social-health integration paths, in practice know and use the specific tools for this integration?

In a specific question we asked about the use of social-health integration instruments in the workplace.

Tab. 6 – In your work environment, do you normally use the following tools of the professional integration between health and social area? (1=never, 5=always).

	<i>1=never</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5=always</i>
Multidimensional evaluation unit	39,8	17,7	19,7	13,4	9,5
Unified management of documentation	32,1	20,0	21,1	14,4	12,4
Case management	49,8	17,8	15,4	9,8	7,0
Individual plans integrated	43,6	19,2	17,5	11,8	7,9

More than 50% (57,4%) of respondents did not use or used very little one of these instruments (Multidimensional evaluation unit) and only 22,9% of respondents often or always used them. This probably is inconsistent with the previous question, where the importance of the pathways of social-health integration was highly considered.

Finally, we could see that Italian nurses, despite have to adhere to life-long learning and have raised their level of education, still feel the need for more specialized training, especially in areas regarding highest health needs in the third millennium, such as geriatrics and aging diseases (87,8%), home care (93,2%), palliative and cancer care (90,8%), chronic diseases (89,4%).

Tab. 7 – Compared to the current health needs of the Italian population, in which areas do you believe that there is more need for specialized training?.

	<i>Sì</i>	<i>No</i>
Geriatrics and aging diseases	87,8	12,2
Critical area	80,9	19,1
Home care	93,2	6,8
Psichiatri	75,2	24,8
Diseases related to marginality (eg. Drug, alcohol)	75,1	24,9
Palliative care and/or cancer care	90,8	9,2
Transcultural nursing	78,0	22,0
Family and community nursing	86,4	13,6
Surgery and transplantation	65,5	34,5
Ethics and bioethics	69,0	31,0
Chronic diseases (SLA, Alzheimer's, diabetes, etc.)	89,4	10,6
Pediatrics and / or gynecology and / or obstetrics	63,8	36,2
Specialist area (dermatology, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, neurology, rheumatology, metabolic diseases, etc.)	57,5	42,5

Conclusions

From these synthetic and preliminary analysis of our survey we can draw some concluding remarks.

First of all, it seems that nurses are more aware than before of the specific nature of their profession, especially of the relational characteristics that distinguish it. This is also confirmed by the need for more training in those areas where the relational aspects have more and more importance as in the case of geriatric care, chronic degenerative care, and palliative care. In this sense, the aspect of the care and cure is mingled, outlining a new model of “care” that is placed side by side to the competences and abilities of all health professionals.

Nurses perceive the importance of having greater autonomy and responsibilities. However, Italian nurses do not feel not enough empowered in these competences, not only because of the lack of knowledge and a general low use related to these models, but probably because these nurses do not know enough these new forms of care and they feel that they still need specialised education in order to operate in full autonomy.

The nursing profession has a clearer structure about the change of the society health needs and is much more aware of the fact that a professional care activity is very important for excellent outcomes of care. More and more the nursing profession has the ethical duty to deal with many problems related to the quality of life, managing innovative services (such as social-health integration services) in order to have more appropriated and specific responses to the new health needs of the general public²⁷.

In conclusion, we can say that the evolution of the nursing profession in Italy seems to tend towards new forms of care, and it is also characterized by greater autonomy and decision-making activities regarding nursing diagnosis, and health promotion, especially in areas of home and territorial care. Anyway, this trend is not yet enough

perceived by Italian nurses, maybe because of the characteristics of the Italian Health System, that is, until now, too much focused on hospital and less on other innovative forms of health care where the nursing profession could develop all its potential capabilities. Anyway, in the current context the distinction between cure and care has not, perhaps, the same significance of some years ago. At that time, nurses demanded strongly the specificity of their care activities. Now, it is clearer that cure cannot exist without care and there are not so specific and strongly distinctions anymore. This new and wide form of “care” is itself “cure” and vice versa.

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The evolution from care to cure in the Italian nursing profession

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Articoli/*Articles*

NURSES CARE, DOCTORS CURE: THE RACIAL
CONSTRUCTION OF WORK FOR BLACK MEN
IN GENDERED OCCUPATIONS

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SUMMARY

NURSES CARE, DOCTORS CURE

The research on gender and work documents that occupations are defined as more gender-appropriate for men or for women. Nursing is seen as a “woman’s job” while being a doctor yields higher economic rewards and status. Most of the research in this area, however, fails to consider how racial minority status affects the performance of duties associated with gendered occupations. I examine how gender and race shape the ways that caring and curing are done in gendered occupations of nursing and medicine. How do black male nurses and doctors construct ideas about caring and curing in their respective professions? These findings can help us understand additional factors that shape the ways medicine and nursing are practiced by minority groups who may experience their professional work differently from those in the majority.

Introduction

Despite women’s rapid advancement into the paid labor force over the last several decades, researchers note that gender differences in work and employment still persist. One of the most notable areas where this occurs is in the gender composition and culture of various jobs. Many jobs and industries remain sex segregated, with

Key words: Gendered occupations - Black professionals - Nurses Care

women clustered in lower paying, lower status positions relative to their male counterparts. Researchers note that these patterns often perpetuate gender inequalities at work and inform the expectations attached to various jobs¹.

Within the health care industry, nursing and medicine are two clear examples of occupations that carry with them distinctive ideas about suitable workers, tasks, and responsibilities. The nursing profession is predominantly white and female, with lower pay, more strictly defined responsibilities, less autonomy, and lower status. In contrast, even despite a recent influx of women into this field, medicine remains a predominantly white male profession where workers enjoy higher wages, status, and prestige than their peers in nursing². These differences extend to job expectations, where (mostly female) nurses are frequently tasked with and expected to be caring, nurturing, and deferential to doctors; while (mostly male) doctors are expected to cure and take on primary responsibility for many aspects of patient wellness³.

In this paper, I consider how race and gender work together to complicate these occupational expectations. Specifically, I examine how black men in nursing and medicine negotiate gendered job expectations that are attached to their occupations. Black men are in the minority in both fields due to race, but are in the gender majority in the medical profession. Thus, in this paper I address how gender and race work in concert to shape the ways they engage in curing and caring in gendered occupations.

Literature Review

In her classic theory of gendered organizations, Acker notes that bureaucracies are often misconstrued as neutral, objective structures⁴. However, she argues that organizations are actually gendered in ways that have implications for the workers, roles, and jobs that exist within them. Following this theory of “gendered organizations,” she contends that different occupations within the same industry are often

subject to implicitly and explicitly defined roles, assumptions, and divisions of labor that reproduce gendered hierarchies and divisions. Researchers have documented this with studies of the ways certain occupations are gendered in ways that offer opportunities for men while perpetuating multiple challenges for women. Jennifer Pierce's classic study of the legal profession explores the ways that attorneys, paralegals, and legal secretaries are all subtly gendered occupations⁵. Her research demonstrates that implied job definitions and expectations are attached to each position. These reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, making it difficult for women attorneys to perform their work satisfactorily, while pressuring women across all professions in the legal field to model feminized behaviors such as deference and caretaking. Men, in contrast, were not expected to engage in these emotional behaviors, but were permitted (even encouraged) to display more masculinized emotions such as aggressiveness and belligerence, even when they worked in predominantly feminized occupations (legal secretaries and paralegals). Studies of gendered occupations have also considered other fields such as nursing, social work, education, and construction, with similar results⁶. Overall, the research in this area indicates that unspoken assumptions and expectations about jobs serve to reinforce gendered hierarchies by sorting women and men into different occupations and rewarding traditional gender behavior.

These studies also give insights into the ways that masculinity becomes embedded in various occupations. Behavioral attributes such as aggressiveness, assertiveness, and risk-taking are particularly encouraged and rewarded in jobs that are primarily performed by men. In her study of men in the construction industry, Paap finds that these traits are encouraged and help to maintain a dividing line between white male workers and the few men of color and women employed in this field. Pierce's research on the legal profession demonstrates that male attorneys performed a "Rambo" masculinity where they

were often belligerent and rude towards opposing counsel, peers, and subordinates. Another study of accountants shows that while the organizational culture matters in constructing masculine behavior, men in this profession are also permitted to express gendered emotions and behaviors⁷.

Importantly, these distinctions persist even when men are employed in female-dominated occupations. Williams' study of mostly white men working as nurses, social workers, librarians, and teachers finds that these men often disassociate themselves from the femininity associated with their profession by seeking ties to higher status men in their workplaces (i.e. doctors or principals). They also pointedly sought out more physical aspects of work, and while they described their relationships with female colleagues favorably, they also sought to establish distance from these women as a means of maintaining male privilege. Pierce also found that men working as paralegals and legal secretaries enjoyed more emotional flexibility than their female counterparts and were not expected to show the emotions of deference and caretaking required of women in this profession⁸.

Gender, Race, and Masculinity

Research has only recently begun to consider the implications of these gendered expectations for minority workers. Though previous studies assert that gendering occupations privileges men in various occupations, additional research indicates that this gendering is a racialized process. That is, minority men often do not benefit from the unspoken gendered expectations attached to jobs when it comes to advancement, promotion, or occupational stability. Instead, these gendered norms are subtly racialized in ways that primarily advantage white men, while in many cases men of color face difficulties conforming to these rules or seeing results because of them.

For Asian American men, common stereotypes that they are passive and nerdy shape their ability to adhere to masculinized norms attached

to white collar, professional occupations. For instance, Cheng finds that white men believe that management roles require men to be aggressive and domineering; thus Asian American men are seen as non-competitive and therefore unqualified for these types of occupations. Rosalind Chou documents that these stereotypes of Asian American men create difficulties at work in male-dominated professions like engineering and business, and Anthony Chen identifies various typologies of masculinity that Asian American men use to try to counteract the stereotypes that hinder their occupational advancement⁹.

In studies of black men working in the nursing profession, Wingfield has shown that in contrast to their white counterparts, these men rarely describe adopting or benefiting from traditional displays of masculinity. Black male nurses did not shun their female counterparts or the femininity associated with their profession. They also did not report close, affable ties with male doctors. Instead, they contended that due to the gendered racism they encountered in nursing, they endorsed the femininity associated with nursing because it allowed them to access their caring side and prove that despite opinions to the contrary, they really were capable, qualified, and good at nursing. They also reported that racial tensions made it difficult to perform masculinity by seeking close ties to (mostly male) doctors. Thus, for black men, implicit racial tensions and stereotypes made it difficult for them to adhere to the gendering of their profession¹⁰. These challenges are present for black men working in white male-dominated occupations as well. In fields like law and construction, white men are free to express the anger, belligerence, or aggressive understood to be suitable for these male-dominated occupations. However, black men working in predominantly male fields like law, banking, engineering, and medicine were reluctant to display irritation or frustration out of fear that they would be subject to stereotypes of the “angry black man.” These men felt that this cultural construction of out of control, dangerous black masculinity made expressions

of normative masculine behavior inappropriate and impossible for them. Thus, even in jobs where occupational norms legitimize traditional definitions of masculinity, racial stereotypes shape the extent to which black men are able to conform to these expectations¹¹. In this study, I consider how the racialization of gendered job expectations informs practices of masculinity in two occupations in the health care field. I examine the ways that black men working as doctors and nurses negotiate the gendered expectations associated with their work, and the implications this has for their practices of curing and caring.

Research Design/Methodology

To conduct this study, I used data from two sources. One was a larger research project focusing on organizational change in the health care industry and the impact this change has on the racial work experiences of black professionals. Data collection consisted of intensive interviews with 25 black men and women working as doctors, nurses, technicians, or physician's assistants (PAs). 10 respondents worked as doctors, 11 as nurses, and 2 were technicians, and 2 were PAs. Respondents ranged from ages 25-77. Of the doctors, six were women, four were men. Nine of the eleven nurses interviewed were women. Both technicians and one of the two PAs were women. I located respondents using a snowball sample that began with personal contacts in the medical industry, and then included their personal and professional links.

Respondents were asked an array of questions about various changes in the health industry and how these changes may have impacted the everyday, routine aspects of their work as black professionals in the health care field. They discussed the changing gender composition of medicine and nursing, revisions to the MCATs, and of course, the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Interviews typically lasted about 90 minutes and were recorded and later transcribed. All respondents are identified by pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

The other source of data came from a study of black men in the nursing profession. This study consisted of interviews with 17 black male nurses in various subspecialties including oncology, ambulatory care, emergency, and surgery. Respondents here ranged in age from 30-51 and worked in suburban, urban, and rural care centers. They had varying degrees of experience in nursing, ranging from 5 to 26 years in the field. I found respondents by using snowball sampling in this case as well. Interviews in this project also lasted approximately 90 minutes, were audio recorded and later transcribed, and took place in my office or in coffee shops. Respondents were asked about their pathways into nursing; challenges they faced in the field; relationships with patients, colleagues, and supervisors; stereotypes about black men in nursing, and their short and long term career goals.

Findings

The findings indicate that for black men in these professions, racial dynamics contextualize the ways they do their work. Their experiences are largely racialized in multiple ways-interactions with colleagues and patients, motivations for working in health care, understandings of their role in the medical industry. It is within this racialized context that gender informs the ways that they engage in caring and curing.

The Racial Context of Work

Black doctors and nurses both described race-related challenges that structured their occupational lives. For black male nurses, these issues often included exclusion, marginalization, and distancing from mostly white female colleagues. Chris, a 51 year old oncology nurse, describes one instance where a coworker attempted to physically segregate him from other white women as he tried to get his instructions for the day's shift:

Adia Harvey Wingfield

She turned and ushered me to the door, and said for me to wait out here, a nurse will come out and give you your report. I stared at her hand on my arm, and then at her, and said, “Why? Where do you go to get your reports?” She said, “I get them in there.” I said, “Right. Unhand me.” I went right back in there, sat down, and started writing down my reports.

In this case, the nurse's attempt to remove him from other colleagues' presence evoked uncomfortable reminders of racial segregation and for Chris, highlighted the ways race and gender rendered him different from his white female coworkers.

Kendall recounts a similar story of being isolated from his colleagues on the job. He states:

[The staff] had nothing to do with me, and they didn't even want me to sit at the same area where they were charting in to take a break. They wanted me to sit somewhere else. [...] They wouldn't even sit at a table with me! When I came and sat down, everybody got up and left.

This obvious, overt example highlights the social-and in this case, physical-distance that Kendall felt from his white female peers. Distancing and marginalization were not exclusive to nurses. Black male doctors also discussed ways they felt isolated from their coworkers, in some cases due to intentional, overt practices. Nathan states:

When you're in a workplace and it's just Caucasians or non African-Americans, they don't tend to believe, or some of the things that happen, they don't believe happened but you know that it happens all the time. For example I had a patient complaint, and the complaint was, one of the supervisors came and said, “I want to tell you something. We had a patient complaint, some lady that you saw February of '08, she came in and she complained, she made a complaint.” And I was like, “Why a year later?” And she said, “That's the strangest thing, she said that she requested a white doctor and there was a black doctor.” And she was like, “Can you believe that?” And she was astonished! And I was like, “Yeah, I believe that. It happens all the time.”

From Nathan's perspective, his white colleagues are unaware of the ways that race shapes his experiences in medicine in ways that are very different from theirs. They were not cognizant of the racial tensions he navigated on a regular basis as one of few black doctors in the hospital.

Kennard shared a similar account. He described a particularly painful experience during his time as a resident:

I was a chief resident at the university, and this is actually one of my most painful memories of just being a physician, period. Some fellow is at the hospital impersonating a doctor, stealing supplies at a local hospital. Now I've been at that program for three years. I've been in everybody's face the whole time. If you're the chief resident obviously you're kind of the smartest guy and so you're doing the consults, you're pressing the flesh with other doctors. A secretary of the chief of medicine got it in her head that I was the guy who was the imposter. This is a true story. That I must have been that person stealing because she hadn't seen this black doctor before. So I came out of an attending's room one day and there's like thirty people outside and I just looked, I thought someone had had a heart attack or something. But the funny thing is they were actually looking at me because this woman was like, "That's the guy." And people went, "Are you crazy? That's Dr. Walcott. He's coming out of the chief resident's room." She said, "No, I saw him, he's here late." This is a real story. So I went over to her and said, "You know the funny thing is I've been doing the consults for three years but you've never looked at my face, which is okay. I'm invisible to you and that's not a big issue with me. But let me explain what is. I am going to talk to your boss and tell him how I feel about this."

Kennard goes on to describe the response when he informed the chief of medicine about the accusations leveled towards him:

And I did, and I said it was reprehensible. I called my chairman and the chairman chewed them all out. The interesting thing is some of the other attendings in the university, the dermatology attendings who were doing slides, and they said, "Oh man, did you hear this hilarious story that happened to Kennard? It was hilarious." And it wasn't hilarious, man. I mean

Adia Harvey Wingfield

I am a black person up here with just one other black person, the chairman, and I got accused of being an imposter thief physician stealing supplies. That's not funny.

The experience of being accused of theft was painful enough, but for Kennard, this was compounded by the fact that his colleagues made light of it and found it humorous. Incidents like this reinforce the sense of being marginalized and sidelined within the professions.

In other cases, black men nurses confronted doubts about their levels of skill, suitability, and preparedness for their profession. Many described interactions with patients and colleagues who assumed that they lacked the requisite skills and training for nursing. Describing one particularly memorable encounter with a patient, Richard stated:

I come [to work] in my white uniform, that's what I wear-being a Black man, I know they won't look at me the same, so I dress the part-I said good evening, my name's Richard, and I'm going to be your nurse. She says to me, "Are you from housekeeping?". [...] I've had other cases. I've walked in and had a lady look at me and ask if I'm the janitor.

Unlike white men nurses who are routinely assumed to be doctors or other higher status officials, it was not uncommon for patients to assume black men nurses filled lower status roles¹².

This process occurred for black male doctors as well. Many noted that it was a common practice for patients to assume they were orderlies or that they were unqualified for their jobs. Marvin, a surgeon, stated:

I think being a black male, I understand a lot about what [my women colleagues] are going through. A lot of them will complain that when they walk into the room, patients say 'I have to hang up the phone now because my nurse is in the room.' But I would tell them that I would much rather be a nurse than an orderly or an X-ray tech.

Like the black male nurses interviewed for this study, race and gender mattered more than occupational category. For Marvin, these served as signifiers to patients that he was in the lower-status role they associated with black men.

These examples show how race set the tone for the work environment these professionals encountered. As racial minorities in predominantly white occupations, black doctors and nurses often dealt with marginalization, sidelining, and presumptions of incompetence or unsuitability for their work. In the next section, however, I discuss how nursing and medicine, as gendered occupations, created differences in the ways black nurses and doctors engaged in caring and curing, respectively.

Black Male Nurses and Caring

Working in predominantly white, gender-segregated occupations, black men in nursing often emphasized the importance of *caring* by categorizing it as something that helped them become more effective at their jobs. This was particularly important given ongoing racial stereotypes and misperceptions assured that they were often undermined or assumed incompetent. Thus, caring allowed them to counter negative perceptions about their lack of suitability for the nursing field. Many of the black male nurses described the role that caring played their work. For these respondents, caring was a critical, integral part of being successful in nursing. Given that respondents described many accounts where patients and colleagues doubted their qualifications, black men nurses responded by showing that they were open and comfortable with caring. They contended that this level of comfort helped position them to be successful in their chosen profession. Christopher gives one example of how he derives joy and personal satisfaction from caring for others:

Adia Harvey Wingfield

The joyous part of the job is just that sense of affecting somebody, of helping somebody. There's one instance in particular that kind of sums up everything and it made me really feel good about being a nurse. There was this one time I was working in the emergency room and I was taking care of a lot of people. I didn't even remember this instance, but this guy came back and he thanked me, he remembered me. I didn't really remember him, I was just doing my job and he thanked me and [told me] he owed his life to me being fast, expediting his care, he said. I guess he was having a heart attack and I took care of him, got his I.V. going, got him straight to the lab in a good amount of time where it would save some tissue damage to his heart. He kind of owed that care, that whole experience to me, kind of like thanked me for him even being on this earth today. I was like, "Wow. Thanks. No problem!" It felt really good cause I didn't, it wasn't anything special that I was doing just for him. I would have done it for anybody and I was just doing my job. So, that felt really good. That was some validation of what I do.

In this example, Christopher indicates one of the ways that caring helps to provide rewards and a level of personal fulfillment.

Curtis speaks even more directly about the ways that caring has meaning for him as a nurse. He states:

I get lots of emotional fulfillment, personal fulfillment. I'm proud of the work I do. I feel that I'm making a difference in the lives of others. I'm contributing something, even if it's nothing more than bringing a smile to a sick person's face. God put me in the position to help others. Not everyone can be a nurse, but it's a calling. I know now it was divine intervention.

For Curtis, being in a profession that requires him to be caring is a source of pride, fulfillment, and satisfaction.

Steven also gives an example of what caring looks like for him during the course of his work as a nurse. He compares his work experience to that of some of his male friends working in traditionally male-dominated professions:

They were going to work with the insurance industries, they were going to work in the E.R. where it's a touch and go, you're a number literally. I don't

get to know your name, I don't get to know that you have four grandkids, I don't get to know that you really want to get out of the hospital by next week because the following week is your birthday, your 80th birthday and it's so important for you. I don't get to know that your cat's name is Sprinkles, and you're concerned about who's feeding the cat now, and if they remembered to turn the TV on during the day so that the cat can watch The Price is Right. They don't get into all that kind of stuff. OK, I actually need to remember the name of your cat so that tomorrow morning when I come, I can ask you about Sprinkles and that will make a world of difference. I'll see light coming to your eyes and the medicines will actually work because your perspective is different.

Steven provides a detailed account of what caring looks like for him in the nursing profession.

For men in nursing, the racial challenges they encountered in the profession meant that caring took on additional significance. It became a way to show their qualifications and fitness for the work and allowed them to behave in ways that were consistent with the occupational norms of the field. The racial dynamics present of being in the numerical minority, coupled with the fact that they worked in a culturally feminized occupation, meant that caring became an integral and important component of the ways that these men did the labor associated with their jobs.

Black Male Doctors and Curing

In contrast, black men in medicine engaged in the process of *curing* by working to reduce racial health disparities. They did not highlight the importance and need for developing caring as a strategy towards proving occupational competence. Instead, they argued that a key-if understated-dynamic of their occupation was that it gave them a means of curing those who were less fortunate.

O'Neil, an anesthesiologist, talked about the importance of focusing on disparities that particularly impacted black communities. He states:

Adia Harvey Wingfield

I think that's really important. There's so many health disparities unfortunately and I think that's one of the things that I hope should be the goal of our field. To limit those health disparities. And in order to do that, we need all doctors to understand different cultures and be able to address and actually seek out to address those health disparities and just being aware of them is the first step. I think historically maybe the medical field kind of turned a blind eye to it. And said that's not our problem, that's a sociologist's problem or the politicians' problem. Let them fix it and let us just deal with health. But I think it's a positive step in the right direction to acknowledge that we play a part in that.

As this quote indicates, O’Neil sees a major part of his role in medicine as the ability to connect with and improve health outcomes for underserved populations.

Langston also makes similar comments about the importance of reducing health disparities. He remarked:

I mean the realization is, health disparities is a big part of [my work]. There's little education associated with health care disparities. And so that's a struggle. That's a struggle and that's where, within medical schools, they're essentially creating curriculums now for addressing that issue. They're trying to get people to understand the cultural competencies of Asian people and people from the middle east. So there's a lot of education going on right now. And it's slow coming.

For Langston, much of his work in the medical field has been driven by the need to improve representation and reduce health disparities for black populations.

For black men working as doctors, curing rather than caring became a critical part of how they structured their work. Significantly, the racial challenges they encountered in medicine, coupled with its gendering as a more masculinized occupation, meant that they did not engage in or practice caring in the same way as their black male counterparts in the nursing profession. Instead, these men engaged in a process of curing wherein they sought to use their training and

professional standing to help improve medical outcomes for black populations more broadly. In the racial context of a more male-dominated occupation, racialized curing in the form of reducing health disparities became more salient.

Conclusions

This paper documents the ways that racialized work experiences inform the ways black professional men in gendered occupations construct parts of their work. Both black male doctors and nurses encounter a racialized environment wherein they face marginalization, social isolation, and doubts about their capabilities. This racialized context shapes how they experience their occupations as gendered rather than neutral, and in turn informs the ways they engage in caring and curing. For black male nurses, the gendered and racial experience of being black men working in a predominantly white, culturally feminized occupation means that curing becomes a way of proving their competence and skill to colleagues and patients who often doubt it. For black male doctors, however, the gendered and racial dynamics of being in a mostly white but culturally masculinized occupation means that they turn to curing vis-a-vis working to reduce racial health disparities. This study shows that it is not just working in a gendered occupation, but the racial context of that work experience that sets the stage for how labor is done by black professionals in health care.

This research has important implications given many of the changes that are currently under way in the American health care system. Nursing is a profession that has long sought to attract more men as a way of raising the profession's status¹³. There are additional movements under way designed to change the minimum educational requirements for nurses from an associate's degree to a bachelors. Yet at the same time, nursing is experiencing a critical shortage due to a rapidly aging population and a declining number of workers trained

to enter this profession. Black men are woefully underrepresented in this profession, and the marginalization and isolation the nurses in this study report may contribute to these low numbers. It might be beneficial to consider making nursing a more inclusive field for underrepresented minorities so that caring becomes simply part of the job rather than a strategy for demonstrating competence.

Similarly, the medical profession is changing in a number of ways, not least of which being the increase of women into the field. More women now complete MDs than men, though the ranks of doctors remain highly male-dominated. Black male doctors, however, remain underrepresented in this field. Given that black male doctors, like black male nurses, encounter social processes and interactions that create a rather unwelcoming work climate, health care policy-makers might devote more attention to ways to make the medical field more open to these practitioners as well. Particularly given their interest in reducing racial health disparities, black male doctors' priorities with regards to curing should be encouraged in and of itself rather than functioning as a coping mechanism in a somewhat hostile environment.

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Articoli/Articles

CARING FOR THE INCURABLE. THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PERSON WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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SUMMARY

After considering the two main approaches at the very foundation of the way the person with AD is considered and her/his illness is treated – the medical and the psychosocial ones – the concept of “existential labour” is proposed to refer to the discursive work involved in articulating, realizing and managing the unique selfhood of dementia sufferers in an attempt to play down the potentially discrediting implications of their unconventional behaviours and implement restorative and socially inclusive actions. This implies to move beyond the classical distinction between a purely medical, technical cure and a social, supportive care, given the close interconnection and the mutual influence between the two concepts that has significantly blurred the boundaries among them. The Chronic Care Model (CCM) is considered a proper strategy to translate the need to reconnect care and cure in a healthcare system oriented to chronic health condition such as Alzheimer's disease, and an experimental project in the Local Health Authority of Catanzaro (Southern Italy) applying an expanded version of it is described and its outcomes assessed in terms of quality of life using the QoL-AD questionnaire. A multidimensional model of longitudinal analysis of QoL is elaborated to analyze these outcomes, and the paradoxical meaning of the results is highlighted and discussed.

Key words: Chronic Health Condition - Alzheimer's disease - Cure and Care

The person with AD between cure and care

Over the last decades, the literature on dementia in general and Alzheimer's disease (AD) in particular has enormously increased, given the mounting epidemiological relevance and social impact of this problem in post-industrial societies. In spite of this, two main approaches remain at the very foundation of the way the person with AD is considered and her/his illness is treated¹. The first is the dominant conventional biomedical approach which portrays sufferers as "lost" to disease, considered as a pathology of the brain, whose irreversible and devastating effects are the depersonalization and the loss of self. More precisely, dementia is seen by this approach as a syndrome, a complex of symptoms resulting from a number of underlying brain pathologies: AD, vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies, and frontotemporal dementia are the most common².

In particular, the term AD dates back to 1906, when the German physician Dr. Alois Alzheimer for the first time diagnosed an agglomeration of pathological abnormalities in the autopsied brain of a woman who was long suffering from memory problems, mental confusion and language dysfunction. During the 20th century, AD has progressively become the most common form of dementia, which affects nowadays 44 millions of people in the world, according to the World Alzheimer Report 2014, and 4.1% of the people aged 65 or more in Italy³; and it is regarded as one of the most dreaded diagnoses, since it is considered incurable and it worsens as it progresses until it leads to death. Therefore, duration essentially corresponds to survival, and the number of cases with dementia in a population (prevalence) depends on risk of developing the disease (incidence) and on the length of survival among those who are affected. Even though AD mainly affects older people, from 2 to 10% of all cases are estimated to start before the age of 65. After this age, the prevalence doubles every five years of old age.

Dementia is one of the main causes of dependence and disability at older ages due to the increasing impairment or decline in cognitive, emotional and perceptual-motor abilities that are essential elements of complex capabilities such as memory, abstract thinking, judgment, speech, language and physical tasks. Additional symptoms may include disorientation, confusion, depression, delusional thought and impulsive emotional outburst. Impairments are usually gradual, and at the beginning easily mistaken as senile changes, even though over time they become more evident and disabling, progressively diminishing the capacity of the affected person to manage the activities of daily life.

The degenerative course of AD is usually depicted by the biomedical model according to a series of stages, whose sequence implies a typical progression in terms of phases of deterioration of various abilities. The practical implications of this typification in terms of more prognostic predictability and clinical manageability are counterbalanced by the contradictory observation and acknowledgement within the biomedical model itself that disease manifestations are often more individual than uniform⁴.

Recently a neurologist, dr. Peter Whitehouse⁵, defined AD as no more than a diagnostic label for natural brain aging, which all of us will get if we live long enough. What he then considered as just a “myth” has turned according to him into a market of more than \$ 100 billion a year, involving the medical profession, pharmaceutical companies, researchers and the media.

The second approach to AD and dementia is based on a psycho-social approach which questions the biomedical’s portrayal of sufferer as a passive victim of a relentless deterioration of mental and physical capacities that crumble over time making the existence a “living death”, i.e., a biologically alive but mentally and socially dead condition⁶. Certainly, dementia represents a profound challenge for the sufferers and for those who care for them, a human tragedy in the

fullest sense: and what is particularly painful is the very fact that little is left of the person the sufferer previously was, s/he is no longer the person relatives, friends, and colleagues once knew. But, and this is the main point of this second approach, s/he is a *person*, even though a *different* one, whose selfhood has become elusive and ostensible, sometimes stripped away of the identifying personal characteristics, sometimes overloaded by the accentuation of characteristic traits of the personality. Understanding this different person requires, according to this approach, a subjective and social contextualization of the illness. This brings, for example, to a more complex aetiology of the illness, whose individual manifestations may be seen as the outcome of a pre-morbid personality type⁷, or related to the variance in the subjective experience of the intensity and quality of symptoms⁸; whereas apparently strange behaviours such as wandering or seeking long-dead parents are considered as psychological responses rather than the direct result of cerebral pathology⁹.

If the sufferer's selfhood is preservable (although modified) even in advanced stages of dementia¹⁰, than this argument has opened spaces for the voices of dementia sufferers to speak for themselves. Phenomenological, hermeneutic, socio-linguistic and narrative studies have all tried to grasp and elicit the embodied, lived experience and particular self-awareness of sufferers who are still able to participate in interviews^{11,12,13,14,15}. Bringing a sense of order and meaning to informant's words and narratives concerning their experiences of illness remains the great problem of these studies, facing with the challenge of producing a coherent account of the particular existence and personhood of these sufferers out their often fragmented, symbolic, wordless exchanges, feeling and images.

The other main approach adopted by psycho-social studies is the symbolic interactionist analysis of the problem of the dementia sufferers' social disconnectedness and interactional incapacity^{16,17}. On the basis of Goffman's dramaturgical theory¹⁸, sufferers' increasing

inability to honour societary conventions for ordinary interactions is considered in terms of their spoiled identities as the result of their failure to meet culturally and situationally defined ordinary expectations by others and of the discredit and stigma this attach to them. However, the stigma of living with dementia does not only affect the person with such chronic condition, but it can also concern the people around them, particularly those who are caring for them. Goffman refers to this as “courtesy stigma”, arguing that there is ‘a tendency for stigma to spread from the stigmatized individual to his close connections’, so that both individuals are treated ‘in some respects as one’¹⁹ and thus both stigmatized. A study of family members of people with AD²⁰ have found that many, even though not all, did experience courtesy stigma.

In order to move beyond the stigma affecting this chronic condition and re-humanizing it, the psycho-social approach shows that it is necessary to re-think our means of understanding it and providing care for the sufferer²¹: the preservation of the person during the progression of dementia is largely the result of the interpersonal process. For example, it is the task of the carers and other people around her/him to fill out gestures and part-actions of sufferers so that they become meaningful social actions²². Therefore, ‘this task is set out in care approaches such as activity, reality orientation, reminiscence and validation therapies. In this approaches, a focus on the talk of dementia sufferers supports the idea of hidden but unique and recoverable personhood. Sufferers’ remembrances are taken to be expressions of identity and analyzed as illness narratives. Listeners are directed to make sense of jumbled stories by seeking metaphoric rather than literal meanings especially when sufferers can no longer observe conventions for language use and conversation’²³.

The concept of “existential labour” has been proposed to refer to the discursive work involved in articulating, realizing and managing the unique selfhood of dementia sufferers in an attempt to play down

the potentially discrediting implications of their unconventional behaviours and implement restorative and socially inclusive actions²⁴. Based on the analysis of how members of an Alzheimer's support group speak of the existence and selfhood of sufferers in their care, this concept shows that the self of the dementia sufferers is even more fully social due to the intensive and increasingly social nature of the work that goes into its production. The notion of existential labour includes articulation rules for eliciting the minds and selfhood of sufferers, charging caregivers to regard their patients as individuals whose abilities, dignities, and personhood are preservable.

The value of this concept for understanding the problematic dimension of assigning self to seriously impaired persons shows the complex nature and the ambivalence of sufferers' self-identity as they live on in a vegetative, liminal state and, at the same time, in a social context: and it's a good example of how difficult has become to actually distinguish between a purely medical, technical cure and a social, supportive care, given the close interconnection and the mutual influence between the two concepts that has significantly blurred the boundaries among them.

However, even the task orientation to care has a limit, when the demise of the mind is seen to be beyond the reach of such work and must finally be accepted, since the restorative work becomes too burdensome. The marginality not only of curing but also of caregiving in the last stage of seriously advanced dementia highlights the actual limit of any human intervention in front of this still mysterious and out of control illness.

An experimental project based on the Expanded Chronic Care Model

To what extent have contemporary health care systems seriously taken into account the need outlined above of a strict interconnection between cure and care? In the past decades, given the increasing concern for chronic diseases – or “chronic health conditions”, as they

are now better named²⁵ – various more comprehensive approaches and models of intervention have emerged which can be applied to dementia and AD, too: they share the idea that, to ensure a more adequate access to a more appropriate healthcare for people with these conditions, it's necessary 'to raise the gaze of health care from the disease to the person and the population'²⁶. These integrated models also advocate for activated patients and caregivers through planned supported self-management and prevention, and regular interactions with them.

Among them, one of the most comprehensive is certainly the Chronic Care Model (CCM), initially developed by Wagner and his colleagues of the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle²⁷. It is grounded in the idea that care for people with chronic conditions requires not only ongoing medical knowledge and appropriate cure, but also time for physicians and other health professionals to have meaningful conversations with them and their caregivers to provide information, guidance, and counselling about prevention, self-management, and available support. The close connection between cure and care is further reinforced in the CCM model by the idea that improved functional and clinical outcomes for people with chronic conditions are the result of productive interaction between prepared, proactive professional teams and the informed, activated patients and caregivers. The CCM is based on six main components: 1) a proper, chronic care orientation of the organization of the healthcare system; 2) an emphasis on the importance of the central role that patients and caregivers can have in self-managing their own care if adequately supported by educational resources, skill training and psychosocial support; 3) an integration of evidence-based guidelines into daily clinical practice of providers for their decision support; 4) a delivery system design focused on teamwork and expanded scope of practice for team members to support chronic care; 5) the development of clinical information systems based on patient populations

to provide relevant data; and 6) the development of a partnership with community organizations as resources that support and meet patients' needs.

The CCM has been implemented by a large number of healthcare organizations in the USA such as Kaiser Permanente²⁸, and in other countries such as in the National Health Service of the United Kingdom²⁹, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Egypt, Australia and Canada. In this last country, in particular, an expanded version has been developed by the Vancouver Island Health Authority³⁰ not only geared to clinically oriented systems, but which can be applied for prevention and health promotion strategies, too. By a population health approach, this expanded version of the model actually moves beyond the use of clinical services to include community and inter-sectoral collaboration, with a shift from hospital-based care focused on illness and disability to community-oriented services that focus on prevention of illness and disability before they have a chance to occur, as suggested by the World Health Organization strategy on innovative care for chronic conditions³¹. In order to do so, it considers the community resources and policy component of CCM (the sixth) as inadequately defined and widens the strategies needed to effectively promote health and prevent chronic health conditions. In fact, to better deal with the social, economic and environmental factors that play a significant role in chronic conditions³², the Expanded CCM considers as porous the border between the formal health system and the community: and the four components of the health system (self-management support, decision support, delivery system design and information system) now straddle that border, whereas the community component is further developed by building healthy public policy, create supportive environments, and strengthen community action (fig.1). If in the original CCM improved functional and clinical outcomes ideally resulted from interaction between teams and patients, in the Expanded CCM improved health

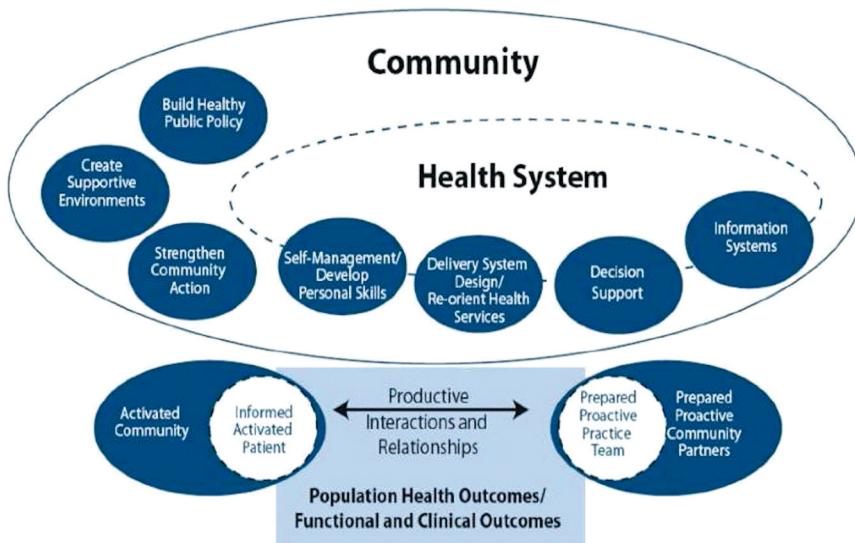


Fig. 1 – The Expanded Chronic Care Model.

of population results from positive and productive interactions and relationships among community members, healthcare professionals, organizations, individuals and community groups.

It is this expanded version of the CCM that the experimental joint project among the University “Magna Græcia”, the Regional Center of Neurogenetics of Lamezia Terme and the Department of Primary Care of the Local Health Authority of Catanzaro (Southern Italy) have tried to apply in the authority territory, coinciding with the province of Catanzaro (sq km 2,390, population aged 65 and over 66,788 out of a total population of 366,647, 18.3%). Funded by the Italian Ministry of Health, the project has lasted two years and 9 months (March 2012 – December 2014) and has considered the cases of dementia and AD, estimated at a rate between 6-10 % of the population aged 65 and over to be between about 4,000 and 6,700.

On the basis of the adoption of the Expanded CCM, the main aim of the project was the pursue of a proactive community approach to dementia

and AD involving patients, caregivers and professionals in order to prevent and anticipate the development of the disease and of its complications by slowing its progression. In order to do so, the focus was on an integrated approach between healthcare services (especially primary care) and social services (both formal and informal) and the development of self-management skills by patients and caregivers by adequate support of health and social services. The main strategy adopted was based on the Kaiser Permanente risk stratification model, which subdivides the patient population with a chronic health condition such as dementia and AD into three main strata (fig. 2): level 1 of low risk patients, which represents the bulk of a CCM population (about 70-80%) for which usual care and self-management with support can be adopted; level 2 of high risk patients, for which assisted

Population Management: More than Care & Case Management

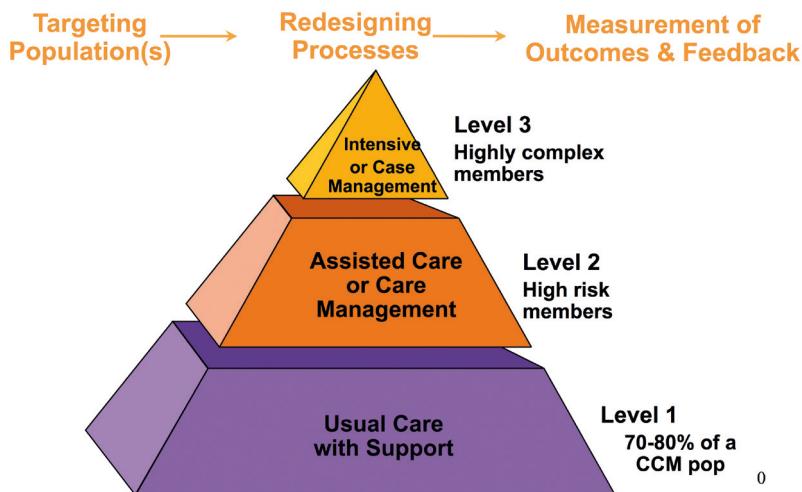


Fig. 2 – Kaiser Permanente risk stratification model.

DISTRICT	SELF CARE	CASE	TOTALE
CATANZARO	5	12	6
LAMEZIA	11	17	10
SOVERATO	4	5	6
TOTAL	20	34	22
			76

Tab.1 – Distribution of enrolled cases by district and levels of severity.

care or care management is required; and level 3 of highly complex patients, for which intensive care or case management is required until possible, when palliative care remains only.

A stratified sample of patients with dementia and AD was selected by self-selection on voluntary basis of 20 general practitioners out of the total 280 of the 3 districts of Catanzaro Local Health Authority: each of them was asked to select four patients, 2 at level 1 and 1 at level 2 and 3 by administering them a Mini Mental Test (MMSE > 10). Because of some selection problems (difficulty by general practitioners in finding out proper patients, unavailability of patients or of their caregivers, etc.), the total amount of enrolled patients was 76, and in tab.1 their distribution in the three districts (Catanzaro, Lamezia and Soverato) by the 3 levels of disease severity (1=self, 2=care, and 3=case) is shown. As it can be seen, there is a significant underrepresentation of level 1 patients: this is mainly due to the difficulties found by general practitioners in enrolling low risk patients who were often unwilling to participate in the project, not being aware of their health condition. A controlled sample with the same number of cases matched by sex, age, education and level of severity was also selected among the patients of the Regional Centre of Neurogenetics of Lamezia Terme: they just followed the usual clinical pathways.

The three main intervention strategies adopted at the three level of disease severity can be so described in terms of specific actors involved in each of them and activities implemented:

Level 1 (*Self-management*): after the GP cognitive screening by MMSE, a multidimensional evaluation was conducted by a multi-professional evaluation team and the QoL-AD questionnaire administered by a social worker three times at a distance of about 9 months. The interventions implemented included periodical home visits by the GP, cognitive rehabilitation by a psychologist, leisure and recreational activities by voluntary associations (Alzheimer Café), a training course on psycho-educational topics for family caregivers (6 meetings + handbook), a self-support group for family caregivers (8 meeting). A second and third multidimensional evaluation by the multi-professional evaluation team was conducted and the QoL-AD administered after 9 and 18 months respectively.

Level 2 (*Care management*): all the above (if possible) + integrated home social and health care + outpatient or home specialist health care (if required).

Level 3 (*Case management*): all the above (if possible) + admission to nursing home or long term ward (if required) + palliative care (in the last phase).

Beyond the above three main strategies, a training on the job for the 20 GPs involved in the project for a total of 9 days (43 hours) was implemented on the main topics regarding chronic health conditions in general and dementia and AD in particular, the Expanded CCM and early diagnosis of dementia and AD, support information system and the management of behavioural disorders. Moreover, an information campaign towards the general population and the elderly in particular was implemented on prevention of dementia and AD by local mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) and the involvement of local voluntary associations and of the schools. Finally, a web site of the project describing all the activities implemented and containing all

the materials produced was created, inclusive of electronic integrated social-medical records and of a forum of discussion open to both patient and health practitioners. Finally, the dissemination of the results was achieved by a final scientific conference and the presentation of papers on the project by various members of the research team (neurologist, geriatrician, public health doctor, psychologist, sociologist). Here we shall concentrate only on the outcomes of the evaluation tool used to assess the final results of the project in terms of improved quality of life, the QoL-AD questionnaire.

Assessing quality of life in older adults with AD

The Expanded CCM is based on a person-focused care (also termed “patient-centred care”) for chronic health conditions which approaches healthcare systems integration from the perspective of the sufferer experience, acknowledging the significant role both the patient and the family caregiver can play for a comprehensive, preventive, more timely and appropriate care. *Fundamentally, person-focused care acknowledges that patient's health problems are not synonymous with their diagnosis and that are not the same as the sum of their diseases*³³. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) by WHO³⁴, indeed, classifies health and health-related domains as *including body functions as well as daily activity and social participation*: this means that any effort to improve the health of people with chronic health conditions is inextricably interlinked with *a quality of life based on meaningful work and relationships*.

People with chronic health condition such as dementia and AD are likely to have a much poorer quality of life compared to others': and the main aim of a type of strategy like the Expanded CCM by primary and secondary prevention and care is to delay the beginning of decline enabling people with chronic conditions to more fully participate in all the aspects of their daily life. Moreover, since chronic conditions affect also the people beyond those immediately affected, particularly

family caregivers, they need to be considered in any resource and support planning. Caring for people with chronic conditions actually carries physical impact: a broad set of physical costs of caregiving has been well documented, ranging from altered response to influenza vaccination to slower wound healing, from lowered immune system functioning to higher blood pressure³⁵. Beyond that, caregivers are more likely to experience inadequate time for sleep, physical exercise, work, leisure and social isolation³⁶; and when highly stressed their risk of depression, greater use of drugs and alcohol, and premature death increase significantly³⁷. This is the reason why is so important to consider not only the quality of life of the sufferer but also of the carers, and even how the first is perceived by the second ones.

The problem of the concept of quality of life (QOL) is that it is a complex, multilayered and multidimensional holistic construct which can be applied to practically all important domains of life, thus resulting quite amorphous and elusive. Therefore, it is not surprising that at least eight different models of approach have been identified, ranging from objective socio-economic indicators of standard of living, health and longevity to subjective satisfaction of human needs and well-being, from macro-ecological indicators to micro-individual health functioning, from cognitive competence and autonomy to hermeneutics approaches emphasising the individual's values, interpretations and perceptions³⁸. A common limitation to many of these approaches, it has been recognized, it's that concepts of QOL adopted have invariably been based on expert opinion rather than on lay perspectives of older people themselves^{39,40}.

In spite of the above disagreement and limitation, when the concept of QOL is applied to old age there are certain areas of broad consensus among the scholars⁴¹. Firstly, the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the concept, which requires an operationalization as a series of different domains and longitudinal measurements at different times. Secondly, QOL in old age is outcome of the interactive

combination of life course and immediate situational factors, both inclusive of micro-individual limitations and capacities and macro-societal constraints and opportunities. Undoubtedly, this combination can be similar between younger and older people, but most of the time it's quite different when we come to health and functional capacities, especially for frail or impaired older people. Thirdly, the sources of QoL in old age can differ significantly between groups of older people themselves: they can range from functional ability to a sense of personal adequacy and usefulness, from social participation to intergenerational family relationship, from socio-economic status to availability of friends and social support. Fourthly, subjective self-assessment of personal well-being is usually more powerful than objective structural factors in explaining variations in QoL ratings: this is because it is not the circumstances per se that are crucial, but the degree of choice or control exercised in them by an older person, and her/his capacity to find compensatory and adaptive strategies.

Since the 1990s, following the general medical trend of moving away from mainly symptoms treatment towards person-focused care, varies scales and tools for the assessment of QoL in people with dementia and AD were developed, most of them referring to Lawton's model⁴² which included four patient-relevant dimensions: psychological well being, perceived quality of life, behaviour competence, and environment. In general, QoL instruments are specific to the severity stage of AD and short and easy to administer: 'however, there has been substantial debate whether patients with AD, especially in more advanced studies, can reliably report on their QoL and whether caregiver reports are an appropriate alternative'⁴³.

This makes the understanding of what is important for the QoL of a person with dementia a real challenge for researchers and professionals: among the different instruments developed specifically for the assessment of QoL in persons with dementia we selected the Quality of Life-Alzheimer's Disease (QoL-AD) for a number

of reasons. It's a quite simple tool developed by Rebecca Logsdon of the Department of Psychosocial and Community Health of the University of Washington (Seattle), including 13 items selected to reflect domains of QoL in older adults home environment based on a literature review of QoL in geriatric populations. The final scale measures the domains of physical health, energy, mood, living situation, memory, family, marriage, friends, self as a whole, ability to do chores around the house, ability to do things for fun, money and life as a whole on 4 point multiple choice options (1= poor, 4 = excellent). Therefore, scale scores range from 13 to 52, with higher scores indicating better QoL.

Face validity and comprehensiveness was ensured by having AD patients, caregivers, non-demented older adults, and dementia experts review potential items. Strengths of this scale are its brevity – it takes an average of only ten minutes to be administered to patients and caregivers – and that it relies on reports from both patients and caregivers, with the chance of comparing their answers. Patients with MMSE score of 10 or higher can usually complete it with no problem; below that, caregivers can act as proxies. A drawback is that it relies on a conceptualization of QoL that may be regarded by some scholars as somewhat broad because it includes items about memory and functional abilities.

Psychometric properties of the QoL-AD were initially evaluated in a group of 77 AD outpatients and their caregivers⁴⁴; and then in a follow-up study with 177 AD patients⁴⁵. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) ranges from .84 to .88 for patients and caregivers. Moderate levels of cognitive impairment do not appear to adversely affect internal consistency reliability and patient-caregiver agreement, which was significant for the total score ($r = .40$, $p < .01$) and for individual items agreement ranged from .04 (ability to do chores) to .45 (energy), with a median value of .24.

A multidimensional model of longitudinal analysis of QoL

On the basis of the above considerations, as it was said, the QoL-Ad questionnaire was administered three times to the sample of enrolled cases during the experimental project with a temporal distance of about 9 months. At the end of the project, only 69 of the 76 enrolled cases completed the pathways: reasons for 7 drop-out cases were transferral of residence or death (tab. 2). As it can be seen, the cases affected were at the intermediate and higher severity only (care and case management). The scores of the above 69 patients were statistically analyzed using the SPSS software and compared with the control cases selected by the same general practitioners and subject to the same survey at two times only (corresponding to t0 and t2 for the cases, whereas it was not possible to make it at t1 for practical reasons), which followed the usual treatment and were matched on the basis of gender, age, education and levels of severity of AD. By looking at the distribution of cases and controls by gender, we can see there is an overrepresentation of female control cases compared with male ones (fig. 3); whereas the range of age classes is better represented in the sample of cases with respect to controls, since in the latter the age-classes of the youngest (40-49) and of the oldest (90-99) are missing (fig. 4). Moreover, with respect to education, it can be said that the sample has a general lower level of education compared to the controls (fig. 5); and, finally, according to levels of severity of AD, the controls are more concentrated at the intermediate level (care) with respect to the cases, where the moderate (self) and highly complex (case) cases are

DISTRICT	SEVERITY			
	SELF	CARE	CASE	TOTAL
CATANZARO	6	10	5	21
LAMEZIA TERME	10	16	7	33
SOVERATO	4	5	6	15

Tab. 2 – Final distribution of cases by district and levels of severity.

more represented (fig. 6). On the whole, we can say that, in spite of the above biases, the two samples are quite balanced and therefore can be considered as comparable.

A further elaboration of demographic and health data regarding the two samples supports this conclusion by showing that in both samples females patients are more concentrated at the intermediate

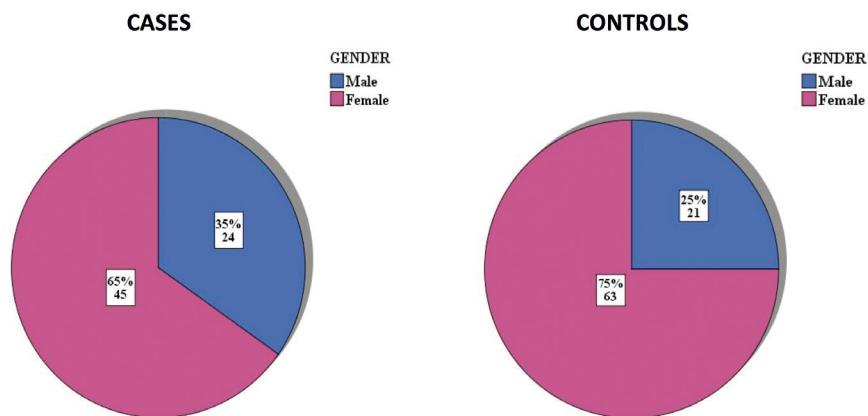


Fig. 3 – Distribution of cases and controls by gender.

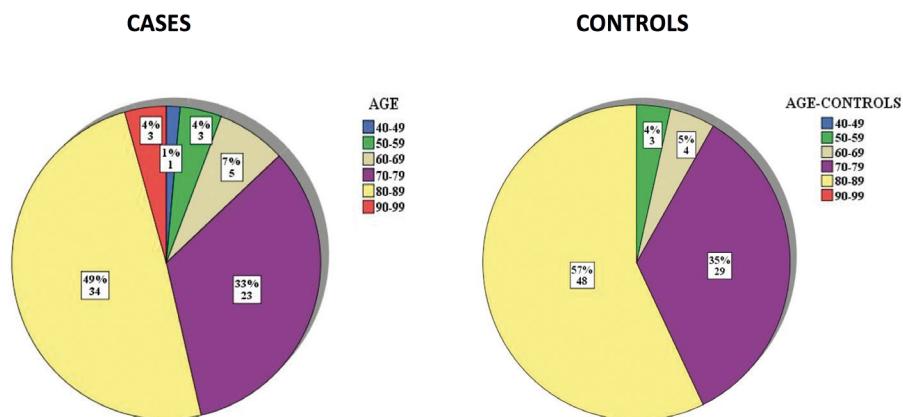


Fig. 4 – Distribution of cases and controls by age.

and highest levels of severity of AD, compared with male patient who are more concentrated at the moderate level (fig. 7). Even with regard to age classes, in both samples the two most severe levels are concentrated in the oldest age classes of 70-79 and more, whereas the moderate level is more scattered among the different age classes (fig. 8).

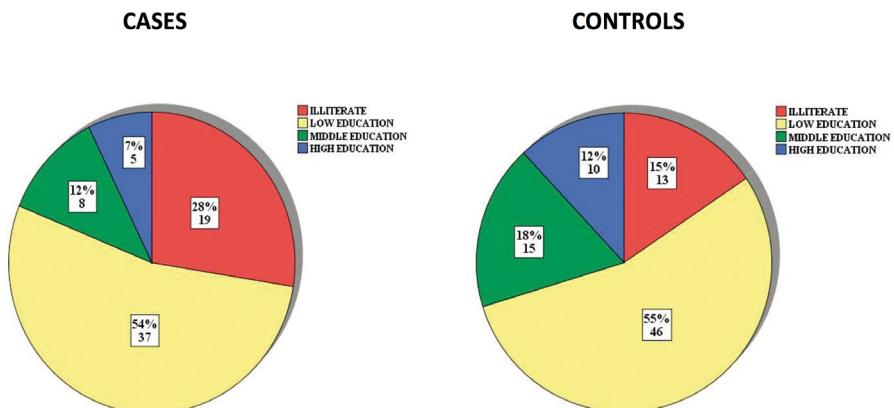


Fig. 5 – Distribution of cases and controls by education.

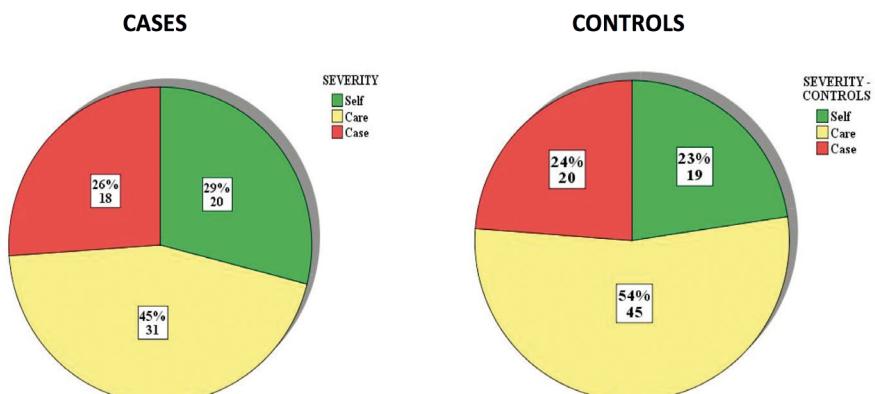


Fig. 6 – Distribution of cases and controls by levels of severity.

In order to examine the outcomes of the QoL-AD, two different but interconnected types of analysis have been elaborated: a longitudinal analysis of the total scores at the three times of the survey (t0, t1, and t2) every nine months by levels of severity of AD; and a multidimensional analysis of the single 13 items of the questionnaire clustered according to 7 main dimensions. Both types of analysis were comparative: between cases and controls, between cases and their caregivers, between controls and their caregivers and between cases' caregivers and controls' caregivers. This type of multilayered analysis has been particularly useful in understanding both the temporal evolution of the subjective perception of the QoL by cases and controls and by their respective caregivers, and how various dimensional components of QoL have differently evolved over the time considered.

With regard to the longitudinal analysis of the total scores at the three times of the survey (t0, t1, and t2) by levels of severity, at

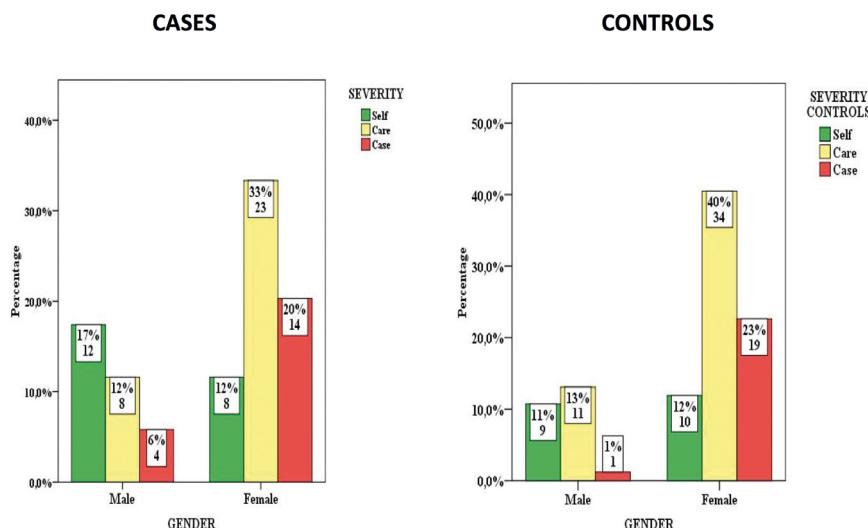


Fig. 7 – Distribution of cases and controls by gender and levels of severity.

t0 there was no meaningful difference between cases and controls, even though QoL evaluation of cases is generally slightly higher than that of controls at moderate (self) and intermediate (care) levels of severity; whereas for highly severe cases (case) it was already impossible to interview them, differently from some controls who were still able to answer the questionnaire (fig.9). It's interesting to note that whereas the evaluation of relatives caregivers of cases is always lower than that of the cases themselves, the evaluation of relatives caregivers of controls is always higher than that of the patients themselves. Generally speaking, it can be said that the overall evaluation of QoL is at least adequate (score = > 25) apart from the relatives of cases whose evaluations are slightly lower (23.9 for care and 23.3 for case).

At t1 (fig.10), when the QoL-AD questionnaire was administered to cases and their relatives only, we can see a general worsening of the self-evaluation by cases (from 29.4 at t0 to 26.6 for self, and from

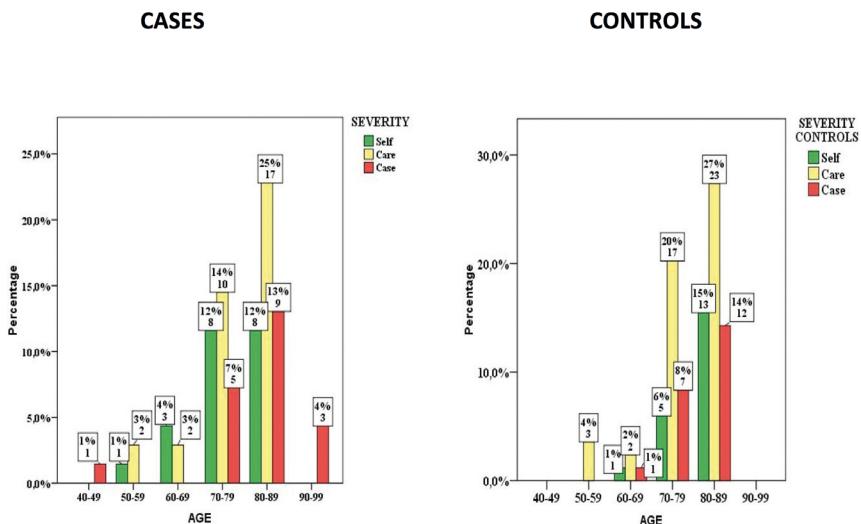


Fig. 8 – Distribution of cases and controls by age and levels of severity.

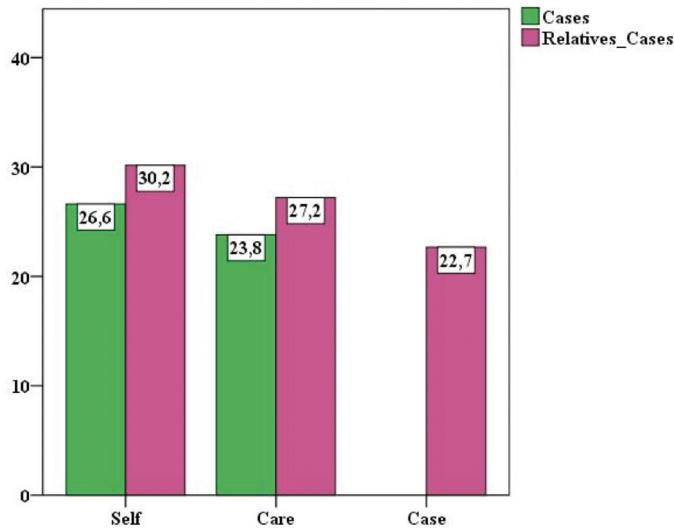


Fig. 9 – QoL total scores at T0 by levels of severity.

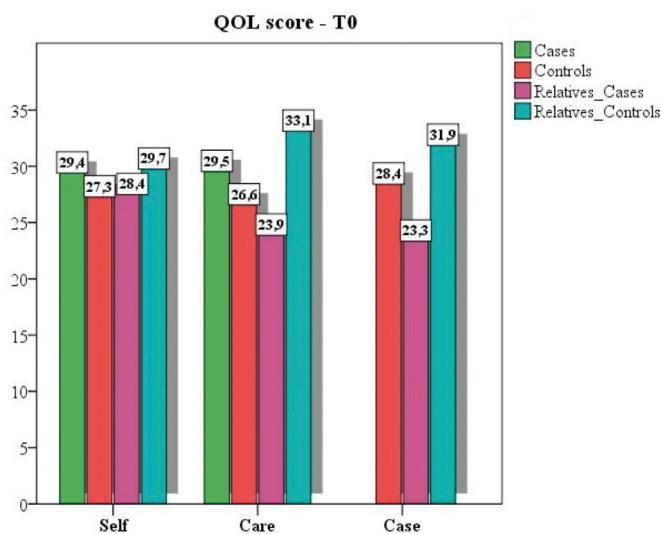


Fig. 10 – QoL total scores at T1 by levels of severity.

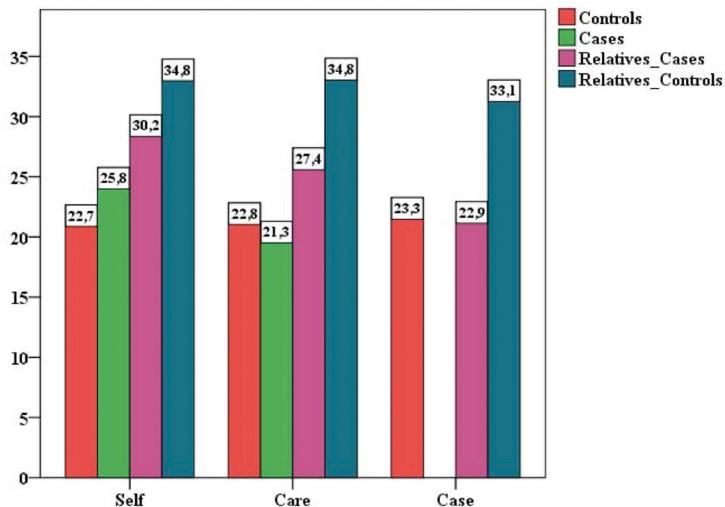


Fig. 11 – QoL total scores at T2 by levels of severity.

29.5 at t0 to 23.8 for care), whereas there is an increase in the evaluation of QoL by the relatives caregivers (from 28.4 at t0 to 30.2 for self, and from 23.9 to 27.2 for care): an interesting inversion of the situation at t0 which needs a proper interpretation. In the discussion of this results within the research team, the hypotheses formulated were related to the project interventions envisaged by the CCM, especially the psychosocial ones: whereas we can suppose they made the cases more aware of their condition (and this lowered more realistically their self-evaluation), they led the relatives caregivers to a greater understanding and a better realistic acceptance of the condition of their family member (and this increased their perceived evaluation of her/his QoL, with the exception of the most severe cases, which remained substantially stable).

Finally, at t2 (fig.11), we can see that the above hypothesis appears confirmed and further reinforced for the cases (whose self-evaluation worsens, lowering to 25.8 for self, and to 21.3 for care) while

remaining substantially stable for their relatives caregivers (whose perceived evaluation remains 30.2 for self and slightly increases to 27.4 for care). The same inverted double trend is evident for the controls and their relatives between t0 and t2: whereas the formers worsen from 27.3 at t0 to 22.7 at t2 for self, from 26.6 at t0 to 22.8 at t2 for care, and from 28.4 at t0 to 23.3 at t2 for case, the latters increase from 29.7 at t0 to 34.8 for self, from 33.1 at t0 to 34.8 at t2 for care, and from 31.9 at t0 to 33.1 at t2 for case.

In order to summarize the delineated inverted double trend, we can see it more clearly in fig.12, even though without distinguishing for levels of severity: between the first (t0) and the last survey (t2), within a temporal interval of about 27 months, the self-perception of QoL by both cases and controls worsens significantly of – 5.6 (cases) and – 4.5 points (controls); whereas the perception of QoL of their family member by relatives caregivers improves of 1.9

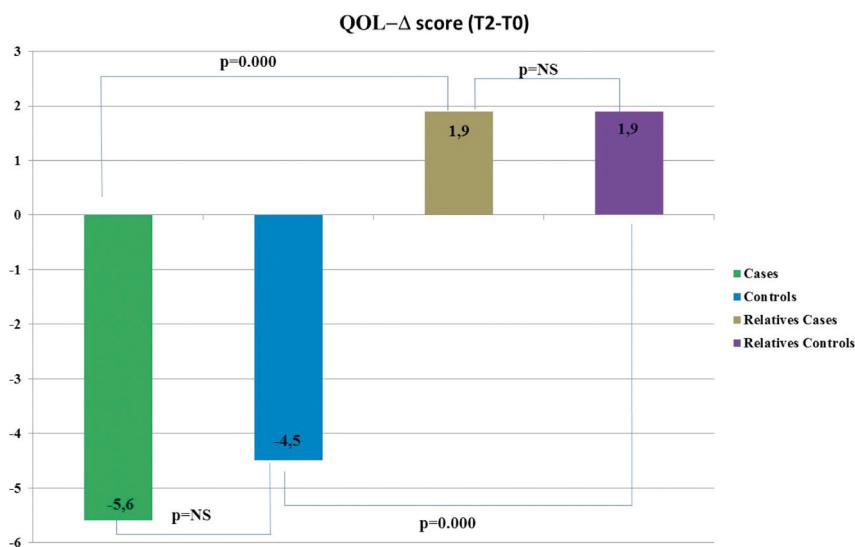


Fig. 12 – Differences of the QoL total scores T2-T0.

DIMENSION	ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1. PHYSICAL HEALTH	1	physical health
2. COGNITIVE HEALTH	5	memory
3. EMOTIONAL SELF-PERCEPTION	3-9	mood, self as a whole
4. FUNCTIONAL ABILITY	2-10-11	energy, ability to do household chores and to do things for fun
5. RELATIONAL ABILITY	6-7-8	family, marriage, friends
6. ECONOMIC SITUATION	4-12	living situation, money
7. EXISTENZIAL CONDITION	13	life as a whole

Tab. 4 – Aggregation of the QoL-AD 13 items in 7 dimensions.

points by both relative of cases and controls. The largest decline of the self-perceived QoL score in cases with respect to controls can be explained partly according to the above hypothesis of increased self-awareness due to the project interventions, and partly because of the general better health condition of the controls compared with the cases (as their capacity to answer the QoL-AD questionnaire testified).

We wanted to check whether the above inverted double trends were correlated in some way with demographic and health variables, and by the Pearson and Spearman tests we found that there is a significant negative correlation between the QoL score and gender (considering females), age and severity of AD, and a positive correlation with education (tab.3). Namely, the level of QoL decreases with the increase of female, aged and more severe cases, where it improves with more educated cases.

Tab. 3 Correlation between QOL score and demographic and health variables of gender, age, education and severity of AD (test of Pearson or Spearman)

The second type of outcome analysis we conducted was of multidimensional type in order to test any significant difference in the QoL scores among its various dimension. For this purpose, the single 13 items of the QoL-AD questionnaire were clustered according to their contents affinity into 7 main dimensions as reported in tab.4.

Therefore, we created 7 new variables by the difference Δ between T2 and T0 of the previous 13 individual items; once we obtained the Δ for all the items we merged them into each dimension according to tab.4 (using the average Δ). Then, we carried out the ANOVA univariate analysis to compare the differences among cases, controls, relatives of case and relatives of controls. We found a great difference among their QoL evaluations in all the seven analyzed dimensions. We then used the Bonferroni post-hoc test to detect which differences were really significant (tab. 5). As it can be seen, there is no significant difference of score between cases and controls, as well as among the relatives of cases and the relatives of controls. Meaningful differences can instead be identified between the cases and their relatives, and between the controls and their relatives.

The same outcomes can better be appreciated graphically in fig.13, where the differences are quite evident. In 4 areas or dimensions the most meaningful differences are between cases and their relatives caregivers: i.e., in the physical, cognitive, functional and relational dimensions. In the remaining 3 areas or dimensions the most meaningful differences are instead between controls and their relatives caregivers: i.e, in the emotional, economic and existential dimensions.

Conclusions

The conclusions regarding the results of the QoL-AD are somewhat paradoxical. We adopted this research tool to assess whether the set of integrated interventions of cure and care envisaged by the Chronic Care Model could improve the QoL of the patients with AD: instead,

Caring for the Incurable

Tab. 5 – Bonferroni post-hoc Test.

Physical Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	0.06	0.17	-0.39 0.51	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.47	0.17	-0.93 -0.01	0.039
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.36	0.13	-0.70 -0.09	0.041
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	0.18	0.13	-0.17 0.53	NS
Cognitive Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.00	0.20	-0.54 0.52	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.88	0.20	-1.42 -0.35	0.000
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.46	0.15	-0.87 -0.06	0.016
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	0.42	0.16	0.00 0.83	0.046
Emotional Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.05	0.14	-0.43 0.33	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.59	0.14	-0.97 -0.21	0.000
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.62	0.11	-0.91 -0.33	0.000
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	-0.08	0.11	-0.37 0.22	NS
Functional Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.16	0.18	-0.64 0.31	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.92	0.18	-1.40 -0.44	0.000
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.64	0.14	-1.00 -0.28	0.000
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	0.12	0.14	-0.25 0.49	NS

Relational Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.18	0.14	-0.57 0.20	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.43	0.15	-0.82 -0.04	0.022
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.32	0.11	-0.61 -0.02	0.031
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	-0.07	0.11	-0.37 0.23	NS
Economic Dimensions				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.01	0.12	-0.34 0.33	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.38	0.13	-0.72 -0.05	0.016
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.44	0.09	-0.69 -0.19	0.000
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	-0.06	0.09	-0.32 0.20	NS
Existential Dimension				
	Mean Difference	Standard Error	C.I. 95%	P_value
Cases - Controls	-0.18	0.18	-0.65 0.29	NS
Cases – Relatives cases	-0.55	0.18	-1.02 -0.07	0.015
Controls - Relatives controls	-0.64	0.14	-1.00 -0.28	0.000
Relatives cases - Relatives controls	-0.27	0.14	-0.64 0.09	NS

at the end we found that the levels of self-rated QoL worsens significantly over time even more among the cases (- 5,6) than among the controls (- 4,5). In order to try to explain this unexpected outcome, we formulated the hypothesis that CCM integrated interventions made the cases more aware of their condition, lowering their self-evaluation to more realistic levels. It's just a supposition we were unable to demonstrate, and we hope that further research will be able to test it.

1. The second paradoxical outcome of the QoL-AD has regarded the relatives caregivers, both of the cases and of the controls: in both cases, in fact, their evaluation of the QoL of their family member with AD improved in the temporal interval of about 27 months quite significantly in the same measure (+ 1,9). Even in this case, we tried to explain this unexpected result by hypothesizing that CCM integrated interventions led the relatives caregivers to a greater understanding and a better realistic acceptance of the condition of their family member, increasing their perceived evaluation of her/his QoL. However, even this hypothesis remains untested, and at least partially contradicted by the very fact that the same phenomenon happened even among the relatives of the controls.
2. In any case, if we consider together both paradoxical outcomes, we can say that probably the most significant result appears the patient-caregiver disagreement regarding their evaluation of QoL, both for cases and controls. It's not just a statistical problem of reliability: there is something more at stake. What these outcomes seem to tell us is that AD is a biunique illness, affecting not only the sufferer, but also her/his family caregivers not only in terms of what Goffman called "courtesy stigma"⁴⁶, but also in a sort of form of

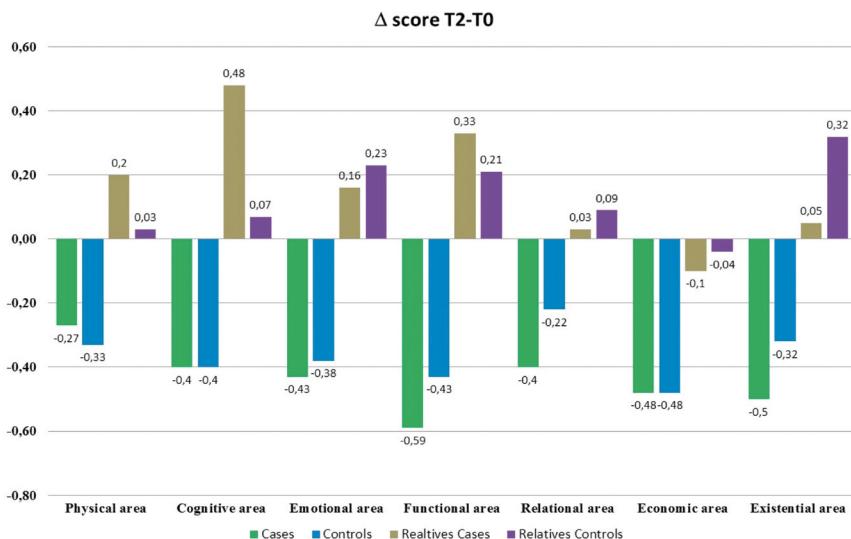


Fig. 13 – Differences of the QoL per dimension T2-T0.

“cognitive dissonance” related to the different perception of the illness and of the ways it affects sufferer’s QoL. As we have seen, all the dimensions into which we have disassembled the concept of QoL are more or less affected by this sufferer-caregiver disagreement. The need to reconcile this discrepancy is probably one of the biggest challenge we face, if we believe that “caring for the incurable” is the only chance we have to accompany the person suffering from AD in her/his inexorable decline into the unknown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND NOTES

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Articoli/Articles

CARE E CURE, COCCOLE E BISTURI
UNA RICERCA SU CLINICI E CHIRURGI¹

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SUMMARY

*CARING AND CURING, CUDDLES AND SCALPELS.
A SURVEY ON CLINICAL PRACTITIONERS AND SURGEONS*

Caring and curing are two different yet connected words: care refers to the care of others; cure instead refers to diagnosis and therapy. Care has always been linked to clinical practitioners, where cure has been more associated to surgeons. In this work, the historical evolution of the treatments will be emphasised and will be linked to a research done on practitioners and surgeons of a province in the South of Italy.

Results show that the working practices of the surgeons are less caring than those of the clinical practitioners; whilst for practitioners the main emphasis is on the patients, for the surgeons the emphasis is on the operating room and its dynamics based on action, speed, drama, strength and resistance.

L'argomento

Nella lingua italiana il termine ‘cura’ è utilizzato in un duplice senso: per indicare il percorso, medicalizzato, di diagnosi e terapia e per riferirsi all’atto (non esclusivamente, o prevalentemente, medico, ma che qui confineremo solo a tale ambito) di prendersi cura dell’altro, cercando di alleviarne sia le sofferenze del corpo sia quelle dell’anima. La lingua inglese utilizza invece - chissà se e

Key words: Care - Cure - Differentiation clinicians-surgeons - Identity

quanto più opportunamente - due parole diverse per indicare i processi citati: *cure* e *care*. Tale uso deriva dall'obiettivo di distinguere, anche a livello terminologico, due aree che sono guidate da logiche differenti: la prima (*cure*) attinge al patrimonio di conoscenze della medicina scientifica ed è quindi guidata dai principi (parsoniani) della razionalità, dell'universalità, della neutralità affettiva; la seconda (*care*) si basa su un patrimonio di conoscenze dallo statuto molto più incerto e controverso, che richiama il modello familiare di assistenza fondato su relazioni di tipo affettivo in cui rientrano elementi come la spontaneità, l'irrazionalità, l'istintualità².

In questi due ambiti si delineano figure professionali diverse in termini di pratiche lavorative e riconoscimenti sociali: generalmente le professioni sanitarie che interagiscono faccia a faccia con il paziente, si occupano di lui in modo olistico (cioè considerando l'intera ampiezza dei suoi bisogni), hanno una struttura di compiti relativamente aperta e flessibile sono considerate *caring*³. Quindi, lungo l'asse ai cui estremi si trovano, da una parte l'attività di assistenza al paziente, dall'altra l'attività di cura, troviamo rispettivamente la figura dell'infermiere e quella del medico. Considerando poi le varie specialità mediche e tenendo presente la definizione di Chambliss, potremmo avanzare un'ulteriore distinzione: i chirurghi sono meno *caring* dei clinici⁴.

Tuttavia, nell'epoca pre-moderna la medicina ha svolto essenzialmente funzioni di *care*. La *cure* era praticamente inesistente e, comunque, ben lontana dall'essere diagnosi veritiera e trattamento curativo realmente efficace. Nell'ambito delle "cure pratiche" operavano figure senza formazione specifica (come i barbieri-chirurghi -indicati anche con i termini dispregiativi di "segaossa" e "cavadenti"- gli speziali-farmacisti e i flebotomi), inferiori socialmente al medico formato nell'Università. Nell'epoca moderna il lavoro medico subisce una radicale rivoluzione grazie alle scoperte scientifiche e allo sviluppo della tecnologia applicato anche alle pratiche professionali. L'aspetto di *cure* si rafforza notevolmente e, di conseguenza, figure una volta ritenute di rango inferiore

e denigrate - perché legate ad attività manuali - cominciano ad assumere rilevanza, oltre che nell'arte medica, anche nell'immaginario collettivo⁵ e nella stratificazione professionale e sociale.

La riflessione che proponiamo in questo articolo è incentrata sul cambiamento del “personaggio” più emblematicamente legato alla dimensione di *cure*, ovvero il chirurgo, che, da “‘segaossa’, insanguinato e pasticcione” che “rappresenta un comune bersaglio di commedie e pubblicazioni a stampa”⁶, diventa, grazie anche all’apporto dato dal cinema, dalla televisione, dalla letteratura e dai media, “la figura di medico più popolare fra la gente”⁷.

Il mutamento della figura del chirurgo è legato a doppio filo all’ampliamento della dimensione di *cure*. Con il progressivo affinamento dei mezzi diagnostici e terapeutici, che rivoluzionano l’intero lavoro medico, l’ambito della chirurgia diventa, infatti, per molti osservatori, quello nel quale i risultati sono più numerosi, concreti ed evidenti. In sostanza, la grande considerazione sociale di cui oggi godono i chirurghi è inquadrabile in un processo che vede la dimensione di *care* sempre più ridotta di importanza rispetto a quella di *cure*. Un processo che, a un livello sociale più ampio, è associato all’utilizzo sempre più accentuato della scienza e della tecnologia non solo in medicina, ma in tutte le sfere della vita umana.

In questo lavoro ripercorreremo le tappe salienti che hanno portato i chirurghi all’affermazione di una loro “giurisdizione”⁸ e, quindi, di una loro identità⁹. Inoltre, servendoci del materiale raccolto in una ricerca¹⁰, condotta su clinici e chirurghi di una provincia del Mezzogiorno¹¹, cercheremo di indagare la natura dei legami che portano le varie specialità mediche a sentirsi più o meno vicine alle dimensioni di *cure* oppure di *care*.

Il materiale empirico è costituito da 39 interviste in profondità. Il numero assoluto dei maschi è 21; quello delle donne è 18¹². Per ciò che riguarda l’età sono state individuate 4 fasce: dal 1927 al 1937, dal 1938 al 1948, dal 1949 al 1959, dal 1960 al 1970. Inoltre, non figurano trentenni (la

più giovane ha 40 anni, il più anziano 82), perché non volevamo sapere solo *perché si sceglie medicina*, ma anche *come si fa il medico* e, quindi, abbiamo pensato di selezionare professionisti con una certa esperienza. Il campione è stato scelto quindi, in parte, in modo che la distribuzione per sesso e età fosse dinamicamente rispettata e in parte, affinché il maggior numero di ruoli medici fosse rappresentato¹³.

In tutte le interviste la consegna iniziale è stata un invito a parlare di sé, della propria vita, evitando così “un pre-centramento su un aspetto specifico”¹⁴. Quasi sempre le domande successive non sono state introdotte nell’ordine previsto dalla traccia iniziale. Infatti, anche se nell’intervista era presente un “canovaccio” fisso - che prevedeva più o meno le stesse domande per tutti - l’intervistato è stato lasciato libero di esprimere le sue opinioni o, meglio, il suo mondo, e spesso ha diretto l’intervista insieme a chi lo interrogava (ricercatore). In sostanza, la traccia ha agito solo come guida esterna e il colloquio è andato avanti secondo le regole dei rilanci che hanno spaziato dai motivi della scelta di medicina ai modi concreti di vivere la pratica medica, dalle differenze fra clinici e chirurghi al ricordo di un episodio significativo per la scelta della professione, da quando e come ci si è sentiti medico per la prima volta al filo che lega vite private e professionali, dal rapporto coi pazienti a quello con i colleghi, dai sentimenti alle emozioni, dalle paure ai desideri, etc.

Le interviste, alcune effettuate negli ultimi tre mesi del 2008 e la maggior parte nel 2009, sono state registrate, successivamente “sbo-binate” ed hanno avuto una durata variabile da poco più di un’ora a due ore e trenta. È appena il caso di aggiungere che nelle ricerche qualitative, come questa, i criteri di rappresentatività non sono cogenti come in quelle quantitative. Il problema, infatti, non è di stabilire quanto sia diffuso un certo atteggiamento in un campione statistico che riproduce i caratteri numerici dell’universo considerato, questione già risolta dalla ricerca precedente¹⁵, ma piuttosto di approfondire in cosa esso consiste e come viene vissuto e riprodotto¹⁶ dai soggetti interessati e, da qui, procedere ad ulteriori generalizzazioni.

Il “segaossa”, insanguinato e pasticciione

Fin dagli albori della civiltà la medicina si è caratterizzata come un insieme di pratiche di *care*, utili a dare consolazione e sollievo ai sofferenti, anche se lontane dall’assicurarne la guarigione.

I riti degli stregoni delle tribù primitive e le pratiche divinatorie e magiche dei medici-sacerdoti delle prime civiltà stanziali (Egitto e Mesopotamia) e della Grecia classica certamente non guarivano un corpo malato, ma davano sollievo alla psiche del sofferente e cercavano di convincerlo che le forze magiche evocate dai sacerdoti fossero in grado di scacciare gli spiriti maligni, causa dei mali. Tuttavia, è durante il cristianesimo che la dimensione di *care*, così come la conosciamo oggi, si rafforza. L’esempio che i medici cristiani cercano di seguire è quello di Saulo di Tarso (San Paolo), emulo di Cristo nel risanare il corpo e l’anima¹⁷.

I valori del cristianesimo vengono ripresi dalla cultura medioevale: il sofferente (non importa chi sia) è accolto, ospitato e assistito nei monasteri e i medici-monaci eseguono il divino comandamento di compiere opere di carità spirituale e corporale. L’idea del tempo è che solo prendendosi cura dei bisognosi e assistendo i malati si entra in rapporto con Cristo¹⁸.

È superfluo sottolineare che, anche in tale periodo, pur ricorrendo a medicamenti, diete e manipolazioni proprie dell’arte medica del tempo, la cura rimane una pratica pietosa e caritatevole, capace di recare consolazione e sollievo, ma non in grado di ripristinare lo stato di salute perduto.

Nel passaggio dal mondo feudale all’età dei comuni, la pratica medica inizia a cambiare, insieme al concetto di salute, ritenuta non più dono di Dio, ma della scienza. Il medico del tempo è un dotto, laureato in filosofia e medicina. La sua formazione prevede un ambito logico-filosofico, basato soprattutto sugli scritti di Aristotele; un ambito teorico basato sulle c.d. *auctoritates*, ovvero i testi di Ippocrate, Galeno, Avicenna e Averro e,

infine, un ambito di medicina pratica che consiste nell'applicazione delle regole teoriche sui pazienti¹⁹. Il terzo ambito potrebbe essere considerato come la dimensione di *cure* del tempo. Tuttavia, il medico fisico-filosofo non solo trascura la pratica fondata su tali regole teoriche, ma, addirittura, la disprezza, perché prevede attività assimilabili alle arti meccaniche.

Sono i chirurghi che, pur non avendo mai ricevuto una formazione prolungata e formale in un'aula universitaria, operano nel campo pratico, "sporcandosi di sangue", ma svolgendo, in qualche modo, attività di *cure*. Fino alla fine del Settecento hanno imparato e perfezionato l'arte dell'incisione nell'esercito: proverbialmente²⁰ i campi di battaglia sono stati la miglior scuola di chirurgia, dove era possibile fare una vasta pratica soprattutto per le ferite causate dai proiettili di piombo che lacerano le carni e le ossa in profondità²¹. Nella vita di tutti i giorni i chirurghi facevano anche i barbieri e gli strumenti che adoperavano erano gli stessi. Molti erano girovaghi, si spostavano da un villaggio all'altro offrendo i loro differenti servizi: ad esempio il cavadenti, l'oculista esperto di cataratte, colui che asportava i calcoli vescicali, etc. A differenza del medico fisico-filosofo, che ha preso impegno giurato di non operare mai *cum ferro et igne*²², ovvero di non utilizzare mai pratiche chirurgiche (il che equivale anche ad una presa di distanza dal corpo malato e ferito e dalla cura intesa come *cure*), le varie figure di chirurgo agiscono invece direttamente sui corpi, utilizzando strumenti (anche se rudimentali, come le lame dei barbieri) per estrarre e amputare e fuoco per cauterizzare tagli e ferite. Le loro pratiche di intervento risultano, quindi, estremamente dolorose e molto rischiose: poche sono le operazioni portate a termine senza decessi per probabili infezioni²³.

Molto più frequentemente del medico fisico-filosofo, quindi, il chirurgo va incontro a numerosi fallimenti che non dipendono tanto dalla sua insufficiente abilità, ma dalla completa inesistenza di strumenti diagnostici e di sostanze anestetiche e asettiche. Forse anche per tali fallimenti egli diventa, nell'immaginario collettivo, un personaggio

macabro e buffo allo stesso tempo: è colui che si insanguina incidentalmente e segando corpi umani e, contemporaneamente, è un “pasticcione” che non ha studiato come i veri medici²⁴ e che, per questo, pratica cure sommarie con risultati disastrosi.

Pur non potendo vantare alcuna superiorità tecnica sul chirurgo (perché il suo campo d’azione è la medicina interna, interpretata attraverso l’esame delle urine e del polso, secondo i dettami dei grandi medici del passato e della fisica aristotelica), il medico fisico-filosofo rivendica, tuttavia, una superiorità etica e sociale: egli è un intellettuale, un uomo di lettere e di letture, che appartiene alle fila dell’aristocrazia e che, detenendo già posizioni di rendita piuttosto elevate (al contrario dei chirurghi che provengono dai ceti mediobassili), svolge la sua professione in maniera disinteressata e nobile. Il forte riferimento alle *auctoritates*, ovvero alle teorie galeniche e ippocratiche, il culto umanista per la forma e le belle lettere²⁵, la contrapposizione tra clinici e chirurghi (e fra la medicina speculativa e quella sperimentale) caratterizzeranno la medicina per molti secoli ancora. Solo verso la fine del Settecento inizierà l’avvicinamento dei medici alla scienza e alla sperimentazione.

Il dottor Frankenstein

Con la nascita della medicina clinica²⁶ si realizzano due processi fondamentali per lo sviluppo della scienza medica: la trasformazione degli ospedali da luogo di mera cura e assistenza per i poveri a strutture che a tale funzione affiancano l’osservazione clinica sistematica e la sperimentazione scientifica, da un lato, e la diffusione della pratica autoptica, dall’altro²⁷.

Se la *care* di questo periodo perde un po’ dei suoi “connotati cristiani”, la *cure* comincia a rafforzare la sua base cognitiva e la sua efficacia: viene progressivamente consentita l’osservazione e la “profanazione” *cum ferro et igne* del corpo umano e malati e cadaveri diventano il principale materiale di studio dei medici.

In questo cambiamento di clima la figura del chirurgo diventa essenziale: è grazie alla sua abilità manuale che si può scrutare l'interno dei corpi, ricostruendo con precisione i meccanismi che hanno portato a lesioni e a malattie. La *cure* riceve, dunque, un impulso notevole dalle pratiche chirurgiche e i chirurghi cominciano a essere rivalutati nell'arte medica.

Nell'immaginario collettivo, però, la pratica chirurgica e la dissezione dei cadaveri continuano a essere associate a personaggi un po' fuori dall'ordinario in senso negativo, anche perché, fra la fine del 1700 e l'inizio del 1800, il successo della scuola medica di Edimburgo e delle scuole private di anatomia londinesi²⁸ hanno premesse e conseguenze "irrituali", ovvero il trafugamento di salme su cui praticare la dissezione. I cadaveri utilizzati per scopi didattici erano, in genere, quelli di condannati a morte ed esisteva anche un florido commercio di salme trafugate dalle sepolture. All'epoca tale pratica era tanto diffusa da far sentire alle autorità di governo l'esigenza di una regolamentazione delle esecuzioni, delle autopsie e, ovviamente, delle sepolture, che portarono all'*Anatomy Act* del 1832²⁹. Porter scrive (2004, p. 152) che, nella Edimburgo di inizio Ottocento, due trafficatori iniziano addirittura a uccidere per vendere poi i corpi delle proprie vittime ai chirurghi. E forse non è un caso se *Frankenstein* viene immaginato da Mary Shelley più o meno in questo periodo (1817): anche il giovane dottor Frankenstein si reca di notte nei cimiteri dove apre le tombe e studia la decomposizione e il percorso degenerativo dei cadaveri, acquisendo così la conoscenza medico-chirurgica che gli permetterà di generare una creatura vivente. Il fatto, poi, che la creatura "resuscitata" da Victor Frankenstein appaia deforme e sgraziata alla vista, dotata di una forza fisica smisurata e potenzialmente pericolosa, sottolinea che, proprio in un periodo in cui la fiducia nella scienza e nella medicina comincia a rafforzarsi, quelle qualità pre-moderne e "rassicuranti" (come l'altruismo, il comportamento rispettabile e il decoro), vicine all'ambito di *care* e

attribuite ai medici più che ai chirurghi, diventano essenziali affinché le nuove conoscenze scientifiche siano percepite positivamente e con fiducia dal pubblico.

A ogni modo, *Frankenstein* a parte, sembra ormai molto lontano il tempo in cui il chirurgo, avvolto in grembiuli schizzati di sangue, esce da stanze squallide (il cui pavimento è coperto di segatura per pulire più facilmente) per annunciare la morte del paziente “sotto i ferri” o per una successiva setticemia. Così come comincia a essere un lontano ricordo il periodo in cui veniva associato ai barbieri³⁰: ora egli studia e fa pratica insieme ai clinici in un ospedale, rivendicando e ottenendo una sua “giurisdizione”³¹ e una sua identità.

In tale periodo l’aspetto di *cure* si rafforza notevolmente grazie ai progressi legati al campo chirurgico. I primi successi della chirurgia riguardano il perfezionamento di pratiche già esistenti attraverso l’introduzione di strumenti specifici, come, per esempio, il laccio emostatico per regolare il flusso sanguigno nelle amputazioni degli arti e il forcipe, utile per estrarre il neonato nei parti difficili. Poi vengono praticati i primi interventi che presentano una certa complessità, come quello eseguito dal chirurgo americano Ephraim McDowell che, nel 1809, sperimenta con successo la prima ovariectomia senza anestesia³².

Tuttavia, è grazie agli sviluppi nel campo dei farmaci anestetizzanti³³ e all’introduzione delle pratiche anti-settiche e a-settiche³⁴ che molti interventi di chirurgia, prima inimmaginabili, cominciano a essere praticati con successo a partire dalla seconda metà dell’Ottocento. A Vienna, ad esempio, Theodor Billroth diventa il pioniere della chirurgia addominale, intervenendo su varie forme di cancro all’addome e alla mammella; in America Halsted pratica la mastectomia radicale, che per lunghi anni rimase l’unica soluzione per il cancro al seno; nel 1882 l’asportazione della colecisti diviene un intervento di *routine*, così come altre operazioni -l’appendicectomia e gli interventi sull’intestino tenue e sulla prostata³⁵.

Le innovazioni tecnologiche di fine Ottocento e inizio Novecento allargano ulteriormente gli orizzonti della chirurgia perché permetteranno di scrutare e sondare, per la prima volta, l'interno del corpo umano: nel 1895 si registra la scoperta dei raggi X³⁶ e, nel 1900, si mette a punto il primo elettrocardiografo, uno strumento in grado di registrare l'attività elettrica del cuore. Più o meno nello stesso periodo due chirurghi ricevono il premio Nobel³⁷.

Agli inizi del Novecento il chirurgo, forte della sua competenza - legata agli sviluppi della scienza e della tecnologia - e dei suoi successi - visibili e concreti per i malati - non è più un "personaggio" ai margini dell'arte medica, ma si accinge a diventare la *star* della medicina moderna.

La star della medicina moderna

Alla fine degli anni Cinquanta del secolo scorso per i chirurghi si apre una nuova fase: si passa dalla chirurgia di estirpazione a quella finalizzata alla riparazione e alla sostituzione. Il *pacemaker* cardiaco costituisce l'esempio più noto di questa nuova era chirurgica³⁸. Tuttavia, il successo più rilevante di questo periodo è il "cuore artificiale", un'apparecchiatura in grado di bypassare l'organo e di conservare artificialmente la circolazione sanguigna, permettendo così di operare sul cuore non in funzione. Ma sono gli innesti e, soprattutto, i trapianti, gli esempi più "spettacolari" della chirurgia sostitutiva. Il primo trapianto viene compiuto nel 1967 da Christiaan Barnard all'Ospedale Groote Schuur di Città del Capo. Barnard trapianta il cuore di una donna a un paziente che riesce a vivere per 18 giorni. Da quel momento in poi i trapianti d'organo (anche in contemporanea) diventano una consuetudine e la probabilità di salvezza e guarigione si fa sempre più frequente³⁹.

In poco più di 150 anni la chirurgia ha registrato, quindi, cambiamenti rivoluzionari: da campo estremamente limitato (e, a volte, pericoloso) diventa ambito senza confini dove "la possibilità di tagliare

è una possibilità di guarire”⁴⁰. E in un clima in cui la possibilità di guarigione dipende dal bisturi, la *cure* risulta progressivamente sempre più associata alla figura del chirurgo. In effetti, dalla scoperta dei raggi x in poi, i chirurghi, aiutati dai sempre più sofisticati strumenti di visualizzazione⁴¹ degli organi interni, diventano, dopo secoli di incertezza sui risultati delle loro pratiche, sicuri e molto ambiziosi. Se nel 1874 l’illustre chirurgo inglese Lister affermava che, “per un chirurgo accorto e umano, l’addome, il torace e il cervello rimarranno sempre interdetti alle operazioni”⁴², circa un secolo dopo, un raffinato scrittore ceco scriverà che “essere chirurgo significa aprire la superficie delle cose e vedere ciò che si nasconde all’interno”⁴³ o ancora, spingendosi oltre: “Dio, si potrebbe supporre, ha previsto l’omicidio, ma non la chirurgia. Non immaginava che qualcuno avrebbe avuto il coraggio di infilare la mano dentro un meccanismo inventato da lui, imballato con cura nella pelle, sigillato e chiuso agli occhi dell’uomo”. Le parole di Milan Kundera ci danno un’idea di come il chirurgo si consideri e sia considerato nella nostra contemporaneità: un uomo⁴⁴ di scienza dal “potere” enorme che possiede delle *technicities* straordinarie in grado di ridare vita e funzionalità perfino a organi “morti” (si pensi alla pratica degli espianti e dei trapianti). E anche quando il suo talento interviene in un campo in cui non c’è un bisogno finalizzato al ristabilimento della salute, come nella chirurgia estetica, il risultato è comunque straordinario: la realizzazione, almeno apparente, del desiderio di bellezza e di “eterna giovinezza”. Questo modello di chirurgo, non si sa se più faustiano o prometeico⁴⁵, si diffonde nell’immaginario collettivo, grazie anche all’apporto della letteratura, dei media, del cinema e della televisione. Quest’ultima, in particolare, è quella che, recentemente, lo ha più celebrato, trasmettendo *fiction* caratterizzate da un realismo inedito: come *Grey’s anatomy* - un *medical drama* del 2005, oggi alla sua decima stagione, che descrive dettagliatamente la giornata in ospedale di un gruppo di tirocinanti, aspiranti chirurgo, le cui storie si

intrecciano con quelle dei chirurghi che li stanno formando - e *Nip/Tuck* - serie del 2003, che si ferma alla sua quinta stagione, ambientata in una Miami ossessionata dai miti della perfezione fisica e della bellezza. Nell'immaginario collettivo contemporaneo "pasticcione" non è più un epiteto da associare al chirurgo (anzi, la parola "precisione" è spesso accompagnata dall'aggettivo "chirurgica", quando la si vuole rafforzare) e il dottor Victor Frankenstein, creatore di un essere brutto e sgraziato, ha lasciato il posto a chirurghi estetici ricchi, brillanti e seducenti - come Sean McNamara e Christian Troy, i protagonisti di *Nip/Tuck* - che, lavorando di bisturi, rappresentano la risposta all' "ossessione" (post-moderna) per l'aspetto fisico e la cura del corpo e, al contempo, la nutrione⁴⁶.

Nel ripercorrere le tappe salienti che hanno portato all'affermazione della chirurgia non abbiamo sottolineato (proprio perché il lavoro è incentrato sulla figura del chirurgo) i successi ottenuti dalla medicina clinica nello stesso periodo. Tuttavia, è utile ricordare che, anche nel campo clinico, la *cure* (che non appartiene solo al chirurgo, ma anche al clinico) diventa molto efficace, grazie agli sviluppi della biologia e della farmacologia. In particolare, fra l'Ottocento e il Novecento lo studio della microbiologia applicato all'uomo e l'introduzione di numerose tecniche di vaccinazione hanno permesso ai clinici di salvare milioni di vite da innumerevoli epidemie mortali, fra cui la peste, il vaiolo, il colera, la malaria, la tubercolosi di cui recano testimonianza molte opere letterarie. Paradossalmente, oggi che le malattie mortali sono state debellate grazie al loro lavoro, la figura dei clinici perde l'*allure* di un tempo.

Comunque, richiamare la clinica o, meglio, la figura del clinico, in questo contesto, ci serve per delineare meglio l'identità del chirurgo. Se, come scrive Alberto Melucci (1982, p. 68), l'identità è un "sistema di relazioni" che comprende la "capacità di un attore di riconoscersi per quello che è [...] e la capacità di distinguersi da altri e di far riconoscere questa diversità", allora l'identità dei chirurghi non

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

può costruirsi senza l’“affermazione della (loro) differenza” rispetto ad altre figure mediche. In breve, non può costruirsi senza il confronto con i clinici⁴⁷.

La ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

Care e cure, relazione e competenza, non sono dimensioni che si escludano necessariamente l’una con l’altra, al contrario, sarebbe auspicabile che fossero tenute assieme da tutti i medici. Tuttavia, esistono specialità che, “per tradizione”, risultano legate maggiormente all’uno o all’altro aspetto, caso classico i clinici-internisti⁴⁸ e i chirurghi. I primi tendono a mantenere e a rivendicare un forte legame con la dimensione di *care*; i secondi sono portati a sottolineare un legame, si è quasi tentati di dire “di sangue”, con quella di *cure*⁴⁹.

Le 39 interviste in profondità, raccolte nella già citata ricerca condotta su clinici e chirurghi di una provincia del Mezzogiorno, costituiscono un buono “spartito” su cui provare a leggere il significato di questi legami. In linea generale, per i tutti clinici intervistati la *care* costituisce una parte importante delle loro pratiche mediche e, infatti, in cima ai loro processi di identificazione vi è, costitutivamente, il rapporto con i pazienti, che risente fortemente delle aspettative altruistiche con cui l’immaginario collettivo struttura l’identità dei medici⁵⁰.

Io mi sento decisamente medico, sono vicino al paziente ... la chirurgia no. I chirurghi sono freddi, sono distaccati, no, no, io mi coinvolgo, i pazienti me li coccolo (corsivo di chi scrive, da cui deriva il titolo del saggio), chirurgo no. Io con il paziente ci parlo tantissimo, è un rapporto bellissimo, il chirurgo è freddo, distaccato, il chirurgo guarda quell’organo, quella ferita, quell’intervento, e lì finisce, non esiste il paziente nella sua totalità, esiste la coleisti, il calcolo al rene, no, no, il paziente non è un organo, è un organismo (medico di pronto soccorso).

C’è una differenza profonda tra medicina e chirurgia, perché dal punto di vista umano la medicina ti obbliga a un rapporto da cui la chirurgia può anche prescindere. I chirurghi sono persone che amano poco parlare

con i pazienti, li vedono solo addormentati ... Io, invece, sono molto empatica con i pazienti e con le famiglie... Ritengo che la professione del medico, e soprattutto del neurologo, deve comprendere non solo la conoscenza, l'utilizzo di farmaci e di terapie, ma pure il sostegno. Dire: "Non ho più niente da fare per lei" è una cosa disumana. I pazienti sono importantissimi, sia per quello che posso dare io, sia per quello che mi trasmettono loro...il paziente è la persona intorno alla quale tu fai ruotare tutto (neurologa).

Con l'aiuto della mia doppia identità di laico (la dimensione di cure, nota degli AA.) ed ex chierichetto (la dimensione di care, nota degli AA.) ho rivestito il ruolo di medico facendolo nel modo migliore e più umano possibile, dando calore e tranquillità all'ammalato con dei sorrisi e qualche pacca sulla spalla ... Credo che un medico bravo che, però, non sorride e non comunica con l'ammalato, sia una contraddizione in termini (internista).

Io mi sento sia medico che chirurgo. Gioca a favore del medico il fatto che mi piace parlare con la gente, entrare nella loro vita, chiacchierare anche del più e del meno; ecco, questa è una cosa che mi piace, il chirurgo non lo fa (ginecologa).

I clinici tendono a sottolineare di considerare i pazienti nella loro totalità (corpo e anima) e non hanno timore, come afferma la ginecologa, di “entrare nella loro vita” né di condividere con loro paure e speranze, dolori e gioie, come fa la neurologa. Sembra quasi di sentire James Kildare, il capostipite di una tipologia cinematografica di medici dai buoni sentimenti, che svolge il suo lavoro nelle immaginarie corsie del Blair General Hospital con impegno e competenza, ma, allo stesso tempo, è sensibile e si interessa alle questioni personali dei propri pazienti, a differenza del suo primario che, invece, ama sottolineare: “il nostro lavoro è tenere in vita le persone, non dire loro come vivere”⁵¹.

Per i chirurghi, invece, ciò che conta sono i risultati del bisturi, della mano. In cima alle loro pratiche e, quindi, ai loro processi di

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

identificazione, vi è, infatti, l'enfatizzazione della sala operatoria e delle sue dinamiche improntate ad azione, velocità, dramma, forza e resistenza fisica⁵².

Mi sono iscritto a medicina con l'idea e con il programma di fare il chirurgo... perché si vedono i risultati. Non credo nelle pillole e negli sciroppi. Credo in quello che può essere un risultato utile, valido, visibile al momento (chirurgo).

Mi sento più chirurgo che medico. La chirurgia, rispetto alla medicina, è la risoluzione drastica del problema, quando può, ovviamente, è immediata, la tocchi con mano, è come il discorso del bianco e nero, non esiste il grigio... Noi abbiamo bisogno comunque della medicina per il trattamento medico, perché la differenza fra i chirurghi attuali e quelli medievali, i famosi barbieri, è proprio questa. Allora, il chirurgo acculturato ha certamente anche del medico... nel post operatorio spesso collaboriamo con i medici, però, ecco, c'è questo approccio diverso. Per definizione la branca medica ha dei tempi che sono certamente più lunghi, una terapia medica dura quel che dura, invece la guarigione chirurgica avviene nel momento in cui tu fai l'intervento (chirurga pediatrica).

La chirurgia è interessante perché riesci a risolvere un problema con la tua manualità e perché, in alcuni momenti, richiede genialità e fantasia ... devi risolvere il problema di una vita che hai davanti, che hai addormentato e sta lì e ci sono dei momenti in cui te lo devi inventare l'intervento ed è proprio questo che è bello... non mi interessano le cose statiche; mi piace molto muovermi, mi piace anche il ragionamento deduttivo, però deve essere veloce, perché stare un pomeriggio a ragionare su un caso, ecco, questo un po' mi annoia. Quindi, a ben pensarci, mi sento un po' più chirurgo che medico. Oggi mi mancherebbe moltissimo la sala operatoria; in questo, forse, rispetto a tante altre donne ginecologhe, sono patologica: la sala operatoria per me è come una specie di droga, nel senso che io sto benissimo in sala, non mi tiro mai indietro al lavarmi per qualunque tipo d'intervento. Nella sala operatoria, quando si opera, l'atmosfera è bella, bella! A me piace molto: prima, dopo e negli intervalli si scherza molto e su tutto, si diventa anche pesanti negli scherzi perché fa parte del gioco alleggerire l'atmosfera (ginecologa).

In quegli anni c'era un primario chirurgo il quale, quando c'era un fegato che non gli piaceva o cose del genere, mi chiamava e diceva: 'Fammi una biopsia sul fegato a cielo aperto...' Essere chirurgo o essere medico sono due modi diversi di auto-compiacersi: il medico è abituato a tormentarsi, a riflettere, probabilmente si diverte più a lungo e quando arriva alle sue conclusioni va quasi in estasi; di conseguenza, quello dell'internista è un piacere prolungato, probabilmente più sofferto. Per il chirurgo, al contrario, l'auto-compiacimento è, per così dire, molto più intenso e più breve, perché si realizza a conclusione del suo atto eroico in sala operatoria. Secondo me la chirurgia può fare tutto e chiaramente risolve i problemi, magari pagando dei prezzi, ma li risolve; l'internista dà una risposta a gran parte degli eventi acuti, ma per un'altra buona parte ha solo il compito di cronicizzarli e renderli meno infausti; per cui, secondo me, il chirurgo ha un ruolo più decisivo dell'internista, anche se in ultima istanza sono complementari (gastroenterologo).

Ciò che caratterizza la chirurgia, rispetto alla medicina, è, innanzitutto, un atteggiamento non passivo, perché il chirurgo la mattina si alza molto presto, entra in sala operatoria alle sette e vive delle ore di intensa emozione e di coscienza rispetto al medico, che certamente è uguale al chirurgo, però ha un'attività più statica: la percussione, l'ascoltazione, il risultato degli esami di laboratorio, il controllo della febbre. Nel chirurgo, invece, c'è un'attività molto più dinamica, non parlo di coscienza né di ansie né di scariche di adrenalina, perché le avrà pure l'internista, però c'è una fattività manuale ... χείρ è la mano, chirurgia vuol dire proprio questo, lavoro della mano, il chirurgo vede immediatamente quello che c'è da vedere, se ne rende conto 'in tempo reale', come si direbbe oggi, non aspetta il risultato, lo vede. Il medico dice: 'ha un'emorragia', il chirurgo la vede l'emorragia, mette il dito in quell'arteria che sanguina e interviene per fermarla (chirurgo ortopedico).

Dai discorsi dei chirurghi il paziente come persona sembra quasi assente: essi si concentrano sui risultati e vedono "un fegato non bello", "l'emorragia", "un'arteria che sanguina", non "una persona con problemi di fegato o che sanguina". Più efficacemente, con le parole di un intervistato, potremmo dire che "il chirurgo guarda quell'organo, quella ferita, quell'intervento, e lì finisce. Non esiste il paziente nella sua totalità, esiste la coleisti, il calcolo al rene".

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

Tuttavia, ciò non significa affatto che il chirurgo sia una persona più cinica del clinico: è una questione di pratiche lavorative diverse. Come abbiamo visto, ripercorrendo in maniera sommaria l'evoluzione della figura del chirurgo, con l'introduzione di strumentazioni di diagnostica visuale molto potenti i medici possono scrutare e sondare l'interno del corpo umano con estrema precisione e facilità. In virtù di questo, i chirurghi non hanno bisogno di parlare con il paziente (“i chirurghi sono persone che amano poco parlare con i pazienti, li vedono solo addormentati”, dice la neurologa intervistata); ritengono superfluo indagare (attraverso il colloquio) le cause dei loro malesseri. Per mezzo delle ecografie, degli endoscopi flessibili a fibre ottiche di vetro, della tomografia assiale computerizzata, di quella a emissione di positroni, della resonanza magnetica nucleare, ecc. essi “parlano” direttamente con gli organi interessati e poi agiscono col bisturi. Quello che ha da dire il paziente può essere, per loro, a volte, del tutto ininfluente.

È una questione di cura, intesa come “care”

Sono le specialità chirurgiche quelle che, tradizionalmente, risultano meno legate alla dimensione di *care*. Ma, a pensarci bene, anche nella medicina clinica la *care* ha uno spazio sempre più ridotto: a volte perché si reputa che la competenza di un medico sia più importante dell'empatia verso i pazienti, in altri casi perché si mette in atto una forma di difesa e ciò avviene soprattutto (e paradossalmente) in quelle specialità che trattano malattie molto gravi come i tumori.

Andando avanti con gli anni mi sono reso conto che la competenza è importante e quindi, se io fossi un paziente e avessi bisogno di un medico, accetterei anche quello meno disponibile sul piano umano, ma dotato di rigore scientifico, impegnato, non pressappochista, un medico che faccia il suo lavoro senza esprimere sentimenti per me va bene. Ma io sono un medico (gastroenterologo).

Non instauro rapporti di amicizia con i pazienti, come fanno, invece, altri miei colleghi che danno loro del “tu” e li chiamano per nome. Io no, non voglio che ci sia un legame, ci resterei troppo male dopo. Forse è una forma di difesa, non è che non sia gentile o che non m’immedesimi, ma lo faccio con un certo distacco proprio per non assorbire tutti questi drammi e quello che ci sta dietro, questo però s’impara con il tempo e l’esperienza ... Noi parliamo di metastasi con la stessa leggerezza con cui si parla di un raffreddore, metastasi significa morte... alla fine, ti abitui anche alla morte (oncologa).

Anche la televisione, come già accennato, con quel suo modo particolarmente veloce di catturare e rappresentare le nuove tendenze, ha acceso i riflettori sul rapporto medico-paziente che cambia. Il medico *old style*, quello rappresentato da Kildare (che tiene in gran conto il rapporto con il paziente perché -in mancanza di strumentazioni efficaci- solo così può formulare la sua diagnosi), ha gradualmente assunto le sembianze del cinico Gregory House, oggi star indiscussa fra i numerosi *medical drama* che pullulano sul piccolo schermo. Il dottor House è il capo del dipartimento di diagnostica dell’immaginario Ospedale Princeton-Plainsboro del New Jersey, un *clinico* che ama sottolineare: “sono diventato medico per curare le malattie, non i malati” e che, forte dei nuovi e potenti strumenti diagnostici, raggiunge la consapevolezza che “i pazienti sono tutti bugiardi e non possono mentirci se noi non parliamo con loro”. House è, ovviamente, anche l’antitesi di Kildare, del medico (*clinico*) empatico e positivo: è diffidente nelle relazioni umane, individualista, cinico, eccentrico, non porta mai il camice e lo stetoscopio, è scontroso e antipatico con pazienti, collaboratori e dirigenti. Tuttavia, è anche un medico scrupoloso, è un brillante diagnosta, è innamorato della medicina e ha un grande senso clinico. Più semplicemente, per Gregory House la competenza (anche scientifica e tecnica) è più importante del mostrarsi disponibile sul piano umano con i pazienti e gli permette, al contempo, di non assorbire i loro drammi che gli farebbero

perdere lucidità nel lavoro⁵³. Come dice anche una delle nostre intervistate (la chirurga pediatrica): “Se ti fai vincere dalle emozioni è finita e combini grossi guai”.

Il clinico vero non esiste più, noi facevamo le diagnosi visitando l'ammalato; per la pleurite non c'era bisogno di fare la radiografia, ce ne accorgevamo già durante la visita ... si faceva la diagnosi al letto dell'ammalato, coadiuvandola, poi, con gli esami di laboratorio ... la visita medica oggi non c'è più. La medicina di oggi è tutta un'altra cosa. È fredda. È fredda e non ti appassiona. Non è bella come la medicina pionieristica. Adesso non vedo quel calore... Anche il fatto, per esempio, di non fare più le diagnosi e di affidarsi solo agli strumenti... non c'è calore (pediatra).

Il “calore” che manca è quello dato dalle attività di *care* che prevedono un rapporto profondo con il paziente: la medicina di oggi (in tutte le sue specialità) è fredda e poco appassionante perché, secondo il nostro pediatra, tende ad affidarsi *solo* agli strumenti, mettendo in secondo piano il rapporto medico-paziente (la visita medica). Il suo non è solo lo sfogo di quello che potremmo definire un clinico *old style*⁵⁴, si tratta di qualcosa di più. Se i medici (clinici o chirurghi che siano) rinunciano al loro lato *caring* (sensibilità, coinvolgimento emotivo, intuizione) perdono la possibilità di *fare meglio*.

Atul Gawande, un medico chirurgo di origine indiana che esercita al Brigham and Women's Hospital di Boston (oltre che essere Assistant Professor alla Harvard Medical School), ha scritto⁵⁵ un libro riportando le storie vere di medici e di pazienti: *Better. A Surgeon's Notes on Performance* (2007). Il libro in italiano è stato tradotto con il titolo *Con cura* (2008). Può sembrare curioso che per descrivere la pratica lavorativa di un chirurgo si adoperi l'espressione “con cura” che rimanda direttamente alle pratiche di *care*. Tuttavia, leggendo l'introduzione del libro (2008, pp. 3-5) si capisce la scelta della traduzione.

Durante l'ultimo anno della facoltà di medicina, mi occupai di una paziente che mi è rimasta impressa [...] Il mio supervisore, un chirurgo dell'ospedale, mi aveva affidato [...] una raggrinzita donna portoghese sui settant'anni che era stata ricoverata perché "non si sentiva troppo bene" [...] Una radiografia del torace lasciava ipotizzare una polmonite, forse, o forse no. Feci un prelievo di espettorato e di sangue e, secondo le istruzioni dell'internista, iniziai una terapia antibiotica per un'eventuale polmonite. Andai a vederla due volte al giorno per diversi giorni. Controllavo il battito cardiaco, auscultavo i polmoni, seguivo i test di laboratorio. Le sue condizioni erano sempre le stesse. Aveva la tosse. Non aveva febbre. Semplicemente non si sentiva bene. Supponevo che le avremmo dato degli antibiotici e l'avremmo dimessa [...]

Una mattina [...] lamentò insonnia e sudori notturni. Forse c'era una leggera accelerazione del battito cardiaco. Ma niente di più. Tienila d'occhio, mi disse il mio supervisore. Certo, dissi io [...] Decisi tra me che sarei tornato a vederla a mezzogiorno [...] Lui però tornò a vederla due volte nel corso della mattinata.

Da allora ho spesso riflettuto su quel gesto. Un atto di per sé insignificante, un piccolissimo gesto di scrupolosità. Aveva notato nella paziente qualcosa che lo preoccupava. Si era anche fatto un'opinione di me durante i giri di visita mattutini [...] Si fidava di me? No, non si fidava. Perciò andò a controllare di persona.

Non era cosa di poco conto. La donna era al quattordicesimo piano dell'ospedale. Le lezioni del mattino, la caffetteria, tutti gli altri posti dove dovevamo trovarci quel giorno erano al primo e secondo piano. Gli ascensori erano notoriamente lenti. Per di più toccava a lui tenere una delle lezioni. Avrebbe potuto aspettare che un'infermiera venisse a chiamarlo, in caso di complicazioni, come avrebbe fatto la maggior parte dei medici. O mandare un medico più giovane a vedere la paziente. Invece ci andò di persona.

La prima volta si accorse che la paziente aveva 39 di febbre e che il flusso di ossigeno attraverso la forcella nasale andava aumentato. La seconda trovò che la pressione era scesa bruscamente e la fece trasferire all'unità di terapia intensiva. Prima che io mi rendessi conto di ciò che stava

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

succedendo, lui aveva già iniziato il trattamento di una polmonite fulminante e resistente ai farmaci che stava degenerando in shock settico. Grazie ai suoi controlli, la donna sopravvisse. E per la stessa ragione, il decorso fu magnifico [...].

Cosa ci vuole per essere bravi in un campo in cui è tanto facile, tanto semplice sbagliare? Quando ero studente, e poi durante la specializzazione, mi preoccupavo soprattutto di acquisire competenze. Ma ciò che quel medico aveva mostrato quel giorno era più che competenza [...]

Era cura, intesa come *care*.

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Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

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1. Il paper è frutto di un lavoro comune, tuttavia i paragrafi 2, 3 e 6 sono stati scritti da Angela Palmieri e i paragrafi 1, 4 e 5 da Lorenzo Speranza. Per il termine “coccole” ringraziamo il medico di pronto soccorso, uno dei 39 intervistati nella ricerca, che l’ha usato (supra p. 201). Gli autori sono grati anche a Claudia Misasi per le sue osservazioni.
2. TOUSIJN W., *Il sistema delle occupazioni sanitarie*. Bologna, il Mulino, 2000, p. 38.
3. CHAMBLISS D. F., *Beyond Caring. Hospitals, Nurses and Social Organisation of Ethics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996. MARZANO M., *Scene finali*. Bologna, il Mulino, 2004.
4. Essi non interagiscono con il paziente poiché nel momento del loro intervento è addormentato; non si occupano del paziente in modo olistico, perché, quasi per definizione, essi sono chiamati a occuparsi solo di una “parte”; i loro compiti non sono flessibili ma estremamente precisi e limitati.

5. CAPPI V., *Pazienti e medici oltre lo schermo. Elementi per un'etnografia dei medical dramas.* Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2015; CAPPI V., *Medici oltre lo schermo: uno studio sull'evoluzione del rapporto medico-paziente a partire dalla fiction televisiva.* Paper presentato a *Storie in corso*, VIII, Workshop nazionale dottorandi della SISSCO, Università dell'Aquila, 19-21 giugno, 2013; PALMIERI A., *Gli stili di vita dei medici. Dal dottor Kildare al dottor House?* Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012.
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9. SPERANZA L., *Medici in cerca di autore.* Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012.
10. Alla ricerca, condotta fra il 2009 e il 2010 e diretta da Lorenzo Speranza, hanno partecipato Claudia Misasi e Angela Palmieri. Le interviste effettuate sono state utilizzate da SPERANZA L. per la stesura del saggio, *Medici in cerca di autore.* Op.cit. nota 9 e da PALMIERI A. per scrivere, *Gli stili di vita dei medici. Dal dottor Kildare al dottor House?* Op. cit. nota 5.
11. Una maggiore articolazione territoriale non è sembrata indispensabile, atteso che, nel volume già pubblicato, “le opinioni dei medici non si sono rivelate molto diverse fra loro” in ragione della differente provenienza geografica (SPERANZA L., TOUSIJN W. e VICARELLI G., *I medici in Italia: motivazioni, autonomia, appartenenza.* Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008.) Inoltre, è opinione generale che, in medicina, siano le facoltà universitarie ad essere responsabili, in buona misura, del processo di socializzazione (HUGHES E. C., *Men and Their Work.* New York, Free Press, 1958.) e che il modello di apprendistato/internato usato influisca significativamente sul modo in cui i medici interiorizzano i ruoli professionali (BEAULIEU M. D., RIOUX M., ROCHER G., SAMSON L. e BOUCHER L., *Family Practice: Professional Identity in Transition. A Case Study.* Social Science & Medicine 2008; 67: 1153-1163). Da questo punto di vista, l’istituzione relativamente recente della facoltà di medicina nell’area geografica considerata, che ha “obbligato” in precedenza gli aspiranti medici ad andare fuori regione per laurearsi, si è tradotta, anche per i medici da noi intervistati, in un quadro molto

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

variegato di provenienze e, quindi, di modelli di socializzazione universitaria (11 laureati a Napoli, 10 a Roma, 4 a Bologna, tre a Pisa e Perugia, due a Firenze, Catanzaro e Messina, uno a Genova e Padova).

12. La percentuale di donne intervistate (46%) è volutamente superiore a quella reale per provare a riflettere la situazione attuale delle Facoltà di Medicina in cui le donne hanno superato i maschi. Abbiamo scelto tre medici legati fra di loro da stretti vincoli di parentela per provare a capire, “dal vivo”, come funzionano i meccanismi dell’auto-riproduzione e della socializzazione professionale nella stessa famiglia.
13. Fra gli intervistati: 30 clinici -11 ospedalieri di cui 5 primari, 12 dipendenti ASL e medici di base, 5 dipendenti cliniche private di cui un direttore, 2 universitari;- 9 chirurghi, di cui 8 ospedalieri con 3 primari e 1 universitario, 1 dipendente cliniche private.
14. BICHI R., *L’intervista biografica*. Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002, p. 27.
15. SPERANZA L., TOUSIJN W. e VICARELLI G., *I medici in Italia: motivazioni, autonomia, appartenenza*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008.
16. BICHI R., *L’intervista biografica*. Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002.
17. COSMACINI G., *Storia della medicina e della sanità in Italia*. Roma-Bari, Laterza,1987, p. 117.
18. COSMACINI G., *Storia della medicina e della sanità in Italia*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1987.
19. COSMACINI G., *Storia della medicina e della sanità in Italia*. Roma-Bari, Laterza1987; porter r., op. cit nota 6, p. 153.
20. Anche Ippocrate aveva scritto che colui che desidera fare il chirurgo dovrebbe andare in guerra.
21. PORTER R., *Blood and Guts. A Short History of Medicine*. London and New York, W. W. Norton & Company Ltd, 2002, trad. it. di BRIOSCHI G. C. e MASCARINO M., *Breve ma veridica storia della medicina occidentale*. Roma, Carocci, 2004, pp. 137-165; PREMUDA L., *La costituzione delle specialità*. in: GRIMEK M. (a cura di), *Storia del pensiero medico occidentale. 3. Dall’età romantica alla medicina moderna*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1998, p. 390.
22. La divisione fra medici e chirurghi è presente sin dai tempi di Ippocrate. La medicina ippocratica si basava soprattutto sull’impiego di medicamenti erboristici. Ciò indusse i medici ippocratici a lasciare che il bisturi fosse di esclusiva pertinenza dei chirurghi (cfr. nota 6). La distanza dei medici dalle pratiche chirurgiche si mantiene nei tempi successivi e fino al XVIII secolo alcuni collegi universitari, per conferire la laurea, richiedevano il giuramento

- di “*non mai operare cum ferro et igne*” (COSMACINI G., *L’arte lunga*. Roma-Bari, Laterza,1997).
23. Fra le poche operazioni estremamente rischiose effettuate in caso d’urgenza c’era il taglio cesareo. Ma, ancora alla fine del Settecento, nessuna donna sopravviveva a questi interventi.
 24. Il chirurgo non ha un’istruzione accademica, ma ha seguito un tirocinio pratico. I chirurghi erano infatti organizzati in corporazioni e colui che insegnava la chirurgia non era un *doctor*, ma un *magister* (COSMACINI G., *L’arte lunga*. Roma-Bari, Laterza,1997; PORTER R., op. cit. nota 6).
 25. Nell’Italia del 1830 la distanza sociale tra i clinici e i chirurghi si basava ancora sulla preparazione umanistica: presso l’ateneo di Perugia, nel progetto per distribuire il corso degli studi medici stilato dopo il 1833, a proposito della preparazione degli studenti, si trova scritto che si ritiene disdicevole che i medici non conoscano a dovere le discipline umanistiche, ma “i chirurghi e i farmacisti [...] potranno esser dispensati dall’attendere allo studio della lingua greca e dell’eloquenza” (MAOVAZ M. et al., *La medicina nell’università di Perugia. Annali della Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia*, Roma, Aracne editrice, 2011, voll. 96-98, pp. 277-358).
 26. Il processo che portò alla medicina clinica iniziò in Francia, precisamente a Parigi. E, come fa notare Michel Foucault (FOUCAULT M., *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*. Paris, PUF, 1963; trad. it. *Nascita della clinica*. Torino, Einaudi, 1969.) non fu un processo esclusivamente tecnico-scientifico, ma affondò le sue radici nel pensiero che ha portato alla rivoluzione del 1789: come quest’ultima liberò la società dai vincoli dell’*ancien régime*, così la medicina clinica riuscì a liberarsi dalle pastoie della medicina settecentesca, rappresentata dalle facoltà universitarie, dalle corporazioni e dagli ordini religiosi.
 27. SPERANZA L., *Medici in cerca di autore*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, pp.171-172.
 28. Inizialmente è la Francia ad essere all’avanguardia nella chirurgia, diventando il centro più ambito per aspiranti chirurghi provenienti da ogni parte d’Europa. Ma in breve tempo anche Londra ed Edimburgo (vantando chirurghi illustri come William Hunter, professore di anatomia, chirurgia, fisiologia, patologia e ostetricia) divengono un polo d’attrazione per studenti di medicina desiderosi di specializzarsi nell’arte dell’incisione (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6.)

29. Tröhler u., *Il trionfo della chirurgia*. In: GRMEK M. (a cura di), *Storia del pensiero medico occidentale. 3. Dall'età romantica alla medicina moderna*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1998, p. 357.
30. Incoraggiata dai suoi primi successi, la chirurgia inizia a innalzare i propri standard professionali già a partire dagli anni '30 del Settecento, quando, sia in Francia sia in Inghilterra, si separa dalla Società dei barbieri. Nella seconda metà del Settecento, poi, si pone fine alla tradizione di formare i chirurghi tramite l'apprendistato (PORTER R., op. cit. nota 6).
31. ABBOTT A., *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1988; abbott a., *Jurisdictional Conflicts: A New Approach to the Development of the Legal Professions*. American Bar Foundation Research Journal 1986; 2: 187-224.
32. Fra il 1843 e il 1883 un altro chirurgo americano, John Attle, asporta le ovaie di 78 donne ottenendo 64 guarigioni (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 153).
33. Nel 1842 un medico di New York effettua l'estrazione di un dente addormentando il paziente con dell'etere (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 153). Nel 1847 Sir James Young Simpson di Edimburgo usò per primo il cloroformio per attenuare il dolore del parto. A metà dell'800, grazie alla possibilità di utilizzare alcuni gas volatili, di etere e cloroformio, la diffusione dell'anestesia diventa un punto cardine della chirurgia moderna (TRÖHLER U., op. cit. nota 29, pp. 366-379).
34. A fine Ottocento, infine, si impone l'antisepsi, la sterilizzazione degli strumenti tramite calore, i guanti di gomma e le mascherine, riducendo drasticamente il rischio di infezioni e dei decessi post-operatori (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 153).
35. PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 157.
36. La metodica radiografica, infatti, si era sviluppata dopo che Wihlelm C. Roentgen (1845-1923), mentre eseguiva ricerche per studiare la reazione fra elettricità e materia, si era accorto di una radiazione invisibile, proveniente da un tubo di Geissler, che produceva l'accensione di una polvere luminescente pur senza alcun passaggio di luce (BALDINI M. e LIPPI D., *La medicina: gli uomini e le teorie*. Bologna, CLUEB, 2000, pp. 321-22).
37. Due chirurghi furono fra i primi ad essere insigniti del Premio Nobel: Theodor Kocher, nel 1909, per la sua opera sulla fisiologia, patologia e chirurgia della ghiandola tiroidea, e Alexis Carrel, nel 1911, per i suoi lavori sulla suturazione dei vasi sanguigni e sui trapianti (TRÖHLER U., op. cit. nota 29, p. 380).
38. Il primo impianto di un apparato artificiale risale al 1959: si tratta del *pacemaker* cardiaco progettato in Svezia da Rune Elmquist; hanno poi fatto seguito i cristallini per l'occhio, gli impianti cocleari, le protesi vascolari, le valvole cardiache e le articolazioni coxo-femorali (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 161).

39. Ovviamente i successi della chirurgia sono sostenuti da altri progressi che avvengono nel campo della scienza medica biologica o clinica: come le trasfusioni ematiche che diventano sicure ed efficaci o l'uso di antibiotici sempre più specifici che bloccano le infezioni post-operatorie.
40. PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 159.
41. Come l'ecografia, introdotta negli anni Cinquanta; gli endoscopi flessibili a fibre ottiche di vetro, la TAC (tomografia assiale computerizzata), la PET (tomografia ad emissione di positroni) e la RMN (risonanza magnetica nucleare), introdotti agli inizi degli anni Settanta (PORTER R., op. cit nota 6).
42. PORTER R., op. cit nota 6, p. 157; ARMOCIDA G., *Storia della medicina dal XVII al XX secolo*. Milano, Editoriale Jaka Book, 1993, p. 48.
43. KUNDERA M., *L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être: roman*. Paris, Gallimard, 1984; trad. it. *L'insostenibile leggerezza dell'essere*. Milano, Adelphi, 1986, p. 200.
44. È molto più probabile che il chirurgo sia un uomo, anche in tempi di femminilizzazione della medicina. Infatti, nonostante nelle Facoltà di medicina la maggioranza femminile sia ormai schiacciante (più del 64% nel 2007), la presenza delle donne medico, molto forte in specialità come pediatria (48%), ginecologia e ostetricia, ecc. è di gran lunga minoritaria nelle chirurgie (9,4%) (VICARELLI G., *Le medichesse*. In: MALATESTA M. (a cura di), *Atlante delle professioni*. Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2009, pp. 263-267). Il fenomeno è stato definito come “segregazione orizzontale e verticale” (SPERANZA L., TOUSIJN W. e VICARELLI G., *I medici in Italia: motivazioni, autonomia, appartenenza*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008, p. 23).
45. SPERANZA L., *Medici in cerca di autore*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012.
46. PALMIERI A., *Gli stili di vita dei medici. Dal dottor Kildare al dottor House?* Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2012.
47. SPERANZA L., *Medici in cerca di autore*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012.
48. Il termine “medicina interna” viene usato per la prima volta nel 1839, al Congresso degli scienziati italiani a Pisa, per distinguerla dalla chirurgia, all’epoca definita “medicina esterna”. Gli ambiti della medicina interna sono la prevenzione, la diagnosi e la terapia non chirurgica.
49. Il distacco dalla dimensione di *care* da parte del chirurgo è stato sottolineato, fin dai tempi dell’epoca romana, da Celso, *De medicina* (VII Praef, 1-4) *Introduzione alla chirurgia. Ritratto del chirurgo ideale* (citato in: SCONOCCHIA S., *Ars et professio medici*. In: LIPPI D. e SCONOCCHIA S. (a cura di), *Ars et professio medici. Humanitas, misericordia, amicitia nella medicina di ieri e di oggi*. Bologna, CLUEB, 2003, pp. 39-110, p.93): “Quanto al chirurgo questi deve essere giovane, o almeno alquanto vicino

Una ricerca su clinici e chirurghi

alla giovinezza; di mano valida, ferma, né che mai tremi, e pronto e abile non meno con la sinistra che con la destra; di forza visiva acuta e chiara, di animo intrepido; dotato di umanità così da voler guarire quello che ha preso in cura, non in modo tale da affrettarsi mosso dalle grida di quello o più di quanto la situazione lo richieda, o in modo tale da tagliare meno di quanto sia necessario; ma da comportarsi così per tutte le necessità (dell'operazione), come se nessuna emozione derivasse a lui dalle urla del paziente”.

50. SPERANZA L., *Medici in cerca di autore*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012.
51. PALMIERI A., *Gli stili di vita dei medici. Dal dottor Kildare al dottor House?* Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2012.
52. SPERANZA L., nota 50.
53. PALMIERI A., nota 51.
54. PALMIERI A., nota 51.
55. Gawande è anche fra i *MacArthur Fellow* 2006, scrive sul *New Yorker* e, in Italia, su *Internazionale*. Il suo primo libro, *Salvo Complicazioni* (2005), è stato finalista del *National Book Award* del 2002.

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Articoli/Articles

LA MEDICINA NARRATIVA IN PSICHIATRIA: UN MODO PER CURARE E PRENDERSI CURA

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LO MONACO, GIOVANNI PREVITI, SARA RUTA
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SUMMARY

NARRATIVE MEDICINE IN PSYCHIATRY: A WAY TO CARE AND CURE

Psychiatry in the last sixty years has undergone a profound evolution characterized by definition of guidelines, development of new pharmacological therapies, new psychiatric rehabilitation programs and mental health institutions. Initially the only treatment, without valid therapies, was “taking care” of psychiatric patients. In 1978 in Italy asylums were closed by the law 180 and mental health services were reorganized. The difference between “to cure”, more linked to pharmacological treatment, and “to care”, linked to various instruments and health services, becomes clearer. Recently narrative medicine has been identified as a versatile way to care and also to help psychiatrists to cure patients. Narrative medicine is based on patients’ histories, in a different way from psychotherapy, and it allows to see the psychiatric disease from the different points of view: clinicians, health care workers, patients and their relatives. In this article we will review the recent developments and uses of narrative medicine in psychiatry.

Introduzione

Ogni considerazione sul curare e prendersi cura in psichiatria non può prescindere dall'affrontare due aspetti preliminari rappresentati

Key words: Narrative medicine - Psychiatry - To care - To cure

dalla particolare posizione della psichiatria nelle scienze mediche e dal rapporto tra il curare e il prendersi cura in medicina.

La psichiatria possiede certamente una doppia anima. Ad un estremo, il desiderio dello psichiatra di essere medico come gli altri, all'altro, l'accentuazione di tutte quelle peculiarità che lo fanno diverso. La stessa sorte segue il suo paziente.

Il moderno santuario della psichiatria come branca medica è rappresentato dalle cliniche psichiatriche e ancora di più, per la forza che deriva dall'integrazione con il territorio, dai servizi di diagnosi e cura ospedalieri. All'interno di questi, la liturgia medica viene rappresentata in maniera abbastanza sovrapponibile a quella di altri reparti: il personale è costituito quasi esclusivamente da medici e infermieri, i camici sono quasi obbligatori, la terapia principale è rappresentata dai farmaci; non mancano gli elementi tipici dell'ospedale come le consulenze specialistiche, gli esami di laboratorio, gli esami neurodiagnostici; e così pure per tutta la parte burocratica come cartelle cliniche, fogli di terapia, fogli di dimissioni e quanto altro ancora costituisce ormai gran parte dell'impegno routinario dell'operatore sanitario oggi. Anche la visita in corsia, il cosiddetto "giro dei letti", sopravvive in moltissimi reparti e la discussione dei casi, pur con le dovute differenze, non si scosta molto dal normale briefing mattutino ospedaliero. Gli elementi distintivi si riducono ad un più stretto contatto con i colleghi del territorio e alla presenza, spesso sporadica e comunque secondaria, di figure come lo psicologo e l'assistente sociale.

A livello simbolico, le porte del reparto chiuse rappresentano una regola comune dettata da motivazioni diverse: in psichiatria sono utilizzate per non far uscire i pazienti, in medicina per non far entrare i familiari. Questo modello fortemente medicalizzato non rappresenta affatto una situazione definita in quanto subisce attacchi provenienti da varie direzioni. Continua ad essere molto forte il richiamo alla neurologia che rappresenta l'anima più profondamente medica del-

la psichiatria, nonostante siano passati quarant'anni dalla definitiva separazione delle relative Scuole di specializzazione da quella originaria in "Malattie nervose e mentali", avvenuta in Italia nel corso degli anni 70; dall'altro lato, è forte la recriminazione nei confronti di un modello radicalmente medico che rischia di disconoscere le enormi problematiche sociali che le grandi patologie psichiatriche affrontano sia in termini di cause che di conseguenze.

La grande giustificazione è data dal fatto che il modello medico trova la più ampia applicazione nel trattamento della fase acuta lasciando alle fasi successive, cronicità compresa, lo spazio per i modelli sociali e riabilitativi.

Un'analisi più approfondita del rapporto tra psichiatria e medicina non può prescindere dal significato dato al curare e al prendersi cura in medicina e quindi al particolare valore che questi due termini hanno per la psichiatria.

Curare e prendersi cura in medicina

Con Ippocrate la Medicina inizia ad allontanarsi dalle influenze di carattere religioso, gettando le basi di un approccio basato su un sapere razionalista. Questa forma di Medicina aveva sviluppato la sua "semeiotica", ovvero la capacità di leggere e decodificare i sintomi ed i segni attraverso i quali la malattia può rivelarsi, essenzialmente attraverso il dialogo fra Medico e Malato. Il Malato raccontava la sua storia, i suoi sintomi, le sue sofferenze, il suo vissuto soggettivo ed il medico ascoltava, raccoglieva le testimonianze e le confrontava con il sapere frutto della sua esperienza. Questa sorta di "approccio narrativo" *ante litteram* era l'unica strada per formulare una diagnosi, a cui faceva seguito la prognosi ed infine la prescrizione di una terapia. Tuttavia, molto spesso l'approccio si concretizzava esclusivamente nell'assicurare una presenza accanto al malato, un supporto alla sua sofferenza.

Con l'avvento della medicina scientifica, la cura del malato tende ad essere spostata quasi esclusivamente sul versante tecnico; ciò comporta tuttavia il progressivo disinteresse nei confronti della persona ‘nella sua totalità’. Così, se la Semeiotica da un lato si arricchisce di riferimenti di effettiva concretezza (confrontare i vari indicatori di malattia conosciuti con le alterazioni effettivamente riscontrate nel paziente), dall'altro viene decisamente messa in secondo piano l'attenzione al racconto e all'ascolto del paziente.

In realtà, un'area dove probabilmente, anche nel passato, l'atto del prendersi cura si era già divaricato da quello di curare era l'area esplicitamente chirurgica: l'intervento chirurgico vero e proprio aveva una sua forte specificità e una sua collocazione temporale, a cui poi seguiva il prendersi cura durante tutta la convalescenza. Anche i successivi interventi chirurgici di carattere relativamente più semplice, fra cui le medicazioni, rientravano nel processo del prendersi cura tant’è vero che spesso tutta questa sezione terapeutica, al di fuori dall’intervento vero e proprio, non era più praticata dal chirurgo, ma dagli antesignani delle attuali figure degli infermieri. È resa ufficiale la distinzione tra chi cura e chi si prende cura. In questa differenziazione di ruoli, un elemento determinante è rappresentato dal contatto fisico con il paziente. Per il medico, per chi cura, il contatto si riduce al minimo indispensabile e nella moderna medicina rischia di scomparire delegando ogni raccolta di informazioni alle macchine o agli esami clinici; per ovvie necessità, tutto ciò che concerne il contatto fisico viene demandato ai non medici, riscontrando anche in questa area professionale notevoli cambiamenti. Si pensi all’uso ormai obbligatorio dei guanti e dei sollevatori per pazienti allettati.

Tali e tante importanti innovazioni, per di più realizzatesi in un arco di tempo estremamente breve, solo due secoli rispetto ai millenni di storia della medicina, in un contesto sociale caratterizzato da una radicale perdita di valori umani, fortemente incentrato su criteri di efficienza e produttività, in cui la Persona vale per quello che ha e per

quello che fa e non per quello che è, non potevano non mettere in crisi anche la Medicina, mortificata sia da una scarsa e a volte scadente partecipazione degli operatori, sia da contenuti etici e morali sempre più limitati e talora discutibili. Paradossalmente, la Medicina, nata a seguito del bisogno di mettersi al servizio della Persona per ciò che essa ha di più prezioso, la vita, sembra non essere in grado di trasformare i grandi progressi scientifici conseguiti in un efficace miglioramento della qualità della vita stessa. Così il Medico, sembra assumere sempre più il ruolo dell’“ingegnere” del corpo umano, e sempre meno quelli del “compagno di viaggio” della persona sofferente.

Se a queste problematiche sovrapponiamo poi le esigenze legate all’aziendalizzazione, alla burocratizzazione e alle varie necessità temporali ed economiche che affliggono la Medicina attuale, ci possiamo rendere conto di come il “prendersi cura” sia progressivamente diventato quasi un termine anacronistico, una sorta di evitabile “perdita di tempo” da sacrificare facilmente sull’altare dell’efficienza, della rapidità e del risparmio, salvo riproporlo come *slogan* nei convegni.

Eppure, ci si dimentica che la medicina esiste proprio per i pazienti, i quali hanno avvertito nel corso degli anni gli esiti inevitabili e disastrosi di questa frattura, allontanandosi sempre di più da un rapporto di fiducia nei confronti di un medico che tende ad ignorare la grave sofferenza soggettiva legata al vissuto di malattia. Se a ciò aggiungiamo che le varie scoperte tecnologiche hanno ridotto notevolmente il prestigio ed il potere diagnostico e terapeutico del medico a vantaggio della “macchina”, si comprenderà facilmente come si sia venuta a creare una situazione terribile in cui medici e pazienti non rappresentano più le due parti di un accordo finalizzato ad un processo di cura, semmai i due attori di un confronto sterile in cui da un lato c’è un individuo che solleva un problema, e dall’altro ce n’è un altro che deve risolverlo.

Ed è proprio in questo contesto che qualcosa inizia a muoversi. La nascita della bioetica, le critiche alla medicina basata sulle evidenze, gli scandali legati alla malasanità e all’influenza del potere economico

sulla medicina, fino alla sempre più diffusa “medicina difensiva” di stampo legale, rappresentano delle condizioni che hanno spinto ad una riflessione più profonda sul ruolo e le mansioni del medico nel XXI secolo, fino a riproporre, come drammatica ed attuale necessità, quella di porre nuovamente il “prendersi cura” alla base dell’atto medico.

La situazione in psichiatria

Per la psichiatria, la storia procede con velocità e percorsi diversi rispetto a quelli della medicina. Si suole far risalire la nascita della psichiatria, intesa come momento nel quale la patologia psichiatrica viene riconosciuta come entità a se stante sia rispetto ad altre patologie sia rispetto ad altre devianze sociali, al famoso gesto di Pinel che libera dalle catene i malati psichiatrici come splendidamente rappresentato nel quadro di Tony Robert Fleury, *Philippe Pinel alla Salpêtrière*.

Sempre storicamente, non è un caso che le prime strutture ausiliari espressamente dedicate ai malati di mente coincidano, spesso, con strutture inizialmente dedicate ad accogliere le vittime delle grandi epidemie e che ora si prendono cura di una popolazione che, anche se sulla base di una patologia completamente diversa, continua a non essere in grado di poter vivere autonomamente e quindi necessita di qualcuno che se ne prenda cura.

Con la medicalizzazione della psichiatria, che si impadronisce di alcuni strumenti terapeutici considerati alla pari con quelli delle altre branche: psicofarmaci, terapie di shock, lobotomia, eccetera, la sfera del “prendersi cura” in psichiatria comincia a perdere di interesse scendendo in quella che è la rappresentazione manicomiale dei decenni che precedono la legge 180, per trovare nuova dignità, solo successivamente, attraverso i principi della riabilitazione. Prende vita un modo di concepire il “prendersi cura” che precede di almeno 30’ anni quei concetti che solo oggi timidamente si evidenziano in area medico-chirurgica come il principio dell’*empowerment*, ovvero del prin-

cipio di coinvolgimento sempre più ampio del paziente nelle scelte di cura. In psichiatria¹, la vera rivoluzione, derivante dai principi sui quali si basa la riabilitazione, è quella di reinterpretare completamente il vecchio modello assistenziale del manicomio per poi sostituire il tradizionale prendersi cura con un “restituire” al paziente la capacità di prendersi cura di se stesso. Non è un caso che fra le pratiche riabilitative di base vengano messe in primo piano quelle relative alla cura della propria persona esercitata direttamente dal paziente.

Proprio dal punto di vista organizzativo, l’ospedale psichiatrico, con la sua chiusura, viene sostituito dalle cosiddette strutture alternative. È interessante notare come, all’interno di queste ultime, le modalità di cura non cambiano: in tutte si praticano varie forme di psicoterapia, la terapia psicofarmacologica è quasi sempre presente, gli interventi riabilitativi dovrebbero essere i trattamenti portanti. Le differenze tra le varie strutture consistono invece nel livello di “protezione”, di “autonomia”, di “intensità della presa in carico”. Le strutture, che in ordine di protezione decrescente possiamo elencare, come Comunità Terapeutiche, Comunità Alloggio, Gruppo Appartamento fino alla struttura dell’affidamento etero-familiare, si connotano con una sempre maggiore riduzione degli interventi strutturati ed una maggiore autonomia del paziente, confermata in maniera notarile dagli standard di personale via via più ridotti, così come le rette.

In psichiatria il prendersi cura, nel senso stretto del termine, è guardato con molto sospetto fino ad assumere connotazioni decisamente negative. Addirittura, ogni intervento che non sia espressamente proiettato al raggiungimento di un maggiore livello di autonomia, può assumere il valore di “intrattenimento”, nel senso così caro a Benedetto Saraceno² per il quale molte delle pratiche, sia terapeutiche che riabilitative, rischiano, private della progettualità verso l’esterno, di diventare “intrattenimento”, impedendo esse stesse la crescita della persona.

Il rischio paventato da Saraceno rimane attuale e non di rado quelle che dovrebbero essere strutture principalmente riabilitative, finalizzate alla crescita della persona, possono diventare invece, a loro volta, elemento di cronicizzazione passando per un processo di dehistoricizzazione della persona. In questi casi, così come capitava in maniera pressoché totalizzante in ospedale psichiatrico, il paziente perde ogni identità personale attraverso un processo che ha il suo momento centrale nella perdita della storia personale dell'individuo che rimane fissata e limitata al periodo precedente all'istituzionalizzazione. Il recupero della storia personale rappresenta il primo passo verso la reistoricizzazione del paziente.

In questo ambito, la medicina narrativa, con la sua attenzione alle storie individuali, rappresenta un utile aiuto ponendo le basi per la sua applicazione nei confronti della psichiatria dove assume una posizione assolutamente originale per una serie di ragioni che passeremo adesso in rassegna.

La nascita della Medicina Narrativa e l'applicazione in Psichiatria

A partire dagli anni '70, mentre in Italia prendevano forza i primi movimenti che contestavano tutta l'organizzazione psichiatrica in favore di approcci più attenti all'ascolto delle storie dei pazienti, fino a quel momento considerati "incapaci" e privi di voce in capitolo, la bioetica e le *medical humanities* cominciarono a svilupparsi e a mettere in discussione il modello di formazione medica, un modello americano che si basava soprattutto sul Flexner Report del 1910³, poi esportato anche in Europa. Sebbene non si possano negare i benefici che tale modello apportò all'organizzazione generale dei corsi di medicina e alla ricerca scientifica, esso si basava esclusivamente sulle scienze biologiche. Ciò comportò che il medico ponesse in secondo piano, affidandosi al suo buon senso, la capacità di comunicare e gestire gli aspetti umani della malattia. In risposta a queste critiche, cominciarono a svilupparsi nuovi modelli di medicina, come per esempio quello

biopsicosociale o quello centrato sul paziente, che tendevano a valorizzare l’aspetto “umano” delle cure sanitarie traendo spunti dalla filosofia, dall’etica, dalla storia, dalla letteratura, dall’arte⁴.

Il termine medicina narrativa, reso famoso da Rita Charon nel 2001, fornisce degli strumenti pratici e concettuali per comprendere il paziente, la sua malattia e la relazione umana che si viene a creare tra il medico ed il paziente. Attraverso la medicina narrativa, i medici e tutti gli operatori sanitari, possono coltivare ed ampliare le proprie capacità empatiche, riflessive, di ascolto e riuscire a prendersi cura della persona con le sue emozioni, paure, speranze, oltre che curare la malattia⁵.

Alla base di questo modello c’è la narrazione fatta dal paziente che diventa uno strumento di comprensione della sua relazione con la malattia e dei suoi effetti sistematici nella vita relazionale. La ricostruzione della storia della malattia e del suo contesto obbliga il paziente a rimettere in ordine i vari elementi e integrarli in una visione d’insieme che favorisce un’analisi critica da parte dell’ascoltatore. Il paradigma narrativo assume un particolare valore nell’approccio ai soggetti con malattie croniche e con disabilità, dove il soggetto e la sua famiglia entrano a pieno titolo come protagonisti e co-autori del percorso di cura⁶. In tal senso la medicina narrativa non è solo un approccio complementare utile a comprendere meglio il paziente e la sua malattia, ma diventa un elemento fondante l’atto diagnostico e di cura^{7,8}. Bisogna tenere anche conto che, attraverso il racconto, il paziente può dar voce non solo al bisogno di essere curato, ma anche a quello di essere accudito.

La Medicina Narrativa in Italia

In Italia la medicina narrativa si è sviluppata nell’ultimo decennio e dalle varie realtà ed iniziative locali, nel 2009 nasce la Società Italiana di Medicina Narrativa con l’intento di riunire all’interno di una società scientifica le sue diverse anime e favorire un confronto nazionale. Nel 2014 si è tenuta a Roma la prima *Consensus Conference* sulla medicina narrativa promossa dal Centro Nazionale

per le Malattie Rare (CNMR) dell’Istituto Superiore di Sanità che ha elaborato le linee guida per definire il fine e le applicazioni della medicina narrativa:

Con il termine di Medicina Narrativa si intende una metodologia clinico-assistenziale basata su una specifica competenza comunicativa. La narrazione è lo strumento fondamentale per acquisire, comprendere e integrare i diversi punti di vista di quanti intervengono nella malattia e nel processo di cura. Il fine è la co-costruzione di un percorso di cura personalizzato e condiviso (storia di cura) ... Le persone, attraverso le loro storie diventano protagonisti del processo di cura...⁹.

Queste definizioni, in linea con i fondamenti teorici internazionali, sintetizzano la finalità della medicina narrativa e il suo potenziale come strumento di crescita nella pratica quotidiana per tutti i professionisti della salute aiutandoli a prendersi cura, ma anche a curare il malato.

La Medicina Narrativa in Psichiatria

La psichiatria storicamente, almeno da quando Freud ha dato una lettura eziologica degli eventi di vita del paziente, aprendo la strada a teorie anche lontanissime dalla psicoanalisi, ma sempre basate su un’interpretazione dei vissuti, ha sempre prestato attenzione alle storie dei pazienti e al loro significato, puntando sull’ascolto e sulla creazione di una relazione significativa. Tuttavia quest’approccio negli anni ha ridotto il suo spazio man mano che questo veniva conquistato dal *to cure* attraverso la neurobiologia, la psicofarmacologia ed un approccio sempre più scientifico e categoriale. Alcuni autori individuano l’inizio di tale processo con la pubblicazione della terza edizione del Manuale diagnostico e statistico dei disturbi mentali (DSM-III)¹⁰ nel 1980 che, come il rapporto di Flexner, ha dato un’impronta più scientifica alla psichiatria a scapito del rapporto empatico tra medico e paziente. I nuovi studi si basavano sul funzionamento dei neurotrasmettitori e sullo sviluppo di nuove molecole

piuttosto che su temi relativi a conflitti interiori o traumi pregressi, temi cari alla psicoterapia in genere. L'inquadramento diagnostico e la conseguente terapia si basano quasi esclusivamente sulla presenza assenza di sintomi, mentre la dimensione storico-temporale rimane marginale e gli eventi vitali, ai quali è comunque riservato uno specifico asse, si riducono anch'essi ad una mera presenza assenza.

Nell'ultimo decennio le critiche al sistema neuroscientifico sono aumentate e la medicina narrativa, all'interno delle *medical humanities*, delle scienze sociali e della bioetica, ha rappresentato un ottimo rifugio per coloro che non si identificavano con tale modello. Questo fermento "narrativo", pur sviluppandosi lontano dalla psichiatria, ha forse contribuito al recupero di un rinnovato approccio narrativo alla psichiatria e alla psicoterapia sull'onda delle teorie narrative che hanno progressivamente invaso la filosofia, l'antropologia, la letteratura e le arti negli ultimi 50 anni¹¹. In questo excursus, Foucault e Ricoeur furono fra i maggiori studiosi a riconoscere alla narrazione il potere di "vincolare o liberare le percezioni, le convinzioni e le speranze umane".

Negli anni '70 e '80, White ed Epston, due psicologi australiani, svilupparono la "*narrative therapy*", una forma di psicoterapia basata sull'esternalizzazione e decostruzione dei problemi tramite la narrazione dei problemi. Molto più recentemente, influenzati dalla nascita del concetto di medicina narrativa, Mehl-Madrona, Lewis e Hamkins hanno sviluppato la psichiatria narrativa¹², che dà particolare importanza alle storie dei pazienti per il valore e il significato che essi stessi attribuiscono agli eventi di vita¹³. Secondo questa teoria, le storie che le persone raccontano non solo descrivono le loro vite ma contemporaneamente le modellano¹⁴. Di conseguenza, lavorare sul racconto della propria storia di vita e/o malattia può favorirne un cambiamento.

Le narrazioni trovano, dunque, terreno fertile nella salute mentale venendo impiegate in vari ambiti e con diverse tipologie di pazienti (J. Launer 1999¹⁵, Pickren Valenti 2010¹⁶, Van der Gaag 2011¹⁷, Hipple

Walters 2015¹⁸). Esse, non solo rappresentano uno strumento per curare, ma sono soprattutto uno strumento per prendersi cura, poiché è proprio nel prendersi cura attraverso le narrazioni che trova senso il curare.

Appare evidente come per la psichiatria la narrazione sia estremamente importante venendo utilizzata come vero e proprio strumento terapeutico. L'ascolto che in medicina generale, pur rivalutandone l'importanza, rimane sempre un passo indietro rispetto alla richiesta di competenza medico-specialistica, in psichiatria rappresenta la tecnica principale alla base di tutte le psicoterapie. Questa “super specializzazione”, “super competenza” in ambito narrativo da parte della psichiatria, ha fatto sì che la medicina narrativa, come è stato chiaramente sottolineato nelle linee guida espresse dalla *Consensus Conference* dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, prendesse le distanze da questa interpretazione che rischiava di farla diventare come una nuova psicoterapia, anche se applicata in ambito medico-chirurgico. Il riconoscimento di queste posizioni rappresenta la premessa per potere distinguere, all'interno della psichiatria, quella che potremmo chiamare “psichiatria narrativa” come area che utilizza la narrazione in senso psicoterapico, da una medicina narrativa applicata alla psichiatria che mantiene obiettivi, strumenti e modalità sovrappponibili a quelle della medicina narrativa applicati in tutte le altre branche medico chirurgiche. Del resto, anche in ambito medico-chirurgico applicazioni specifiche della narrazione - finalizzate a cambiamenti profondi della persona ed inseriti in *setting* con una strutturazione di tipo psicoterapico - possono diventare vere e proprie psicoterapie

Avendo ben chiare queste distinzioni, bisogna riconoscere che la “super competenza” della psichiatria in ambito narrativo non ha protetto questa specializzazione dal generale allontanamento della classe medica dall'ascolto del paziente. Più precisamente, è come se lo psichiatra avesse circoscritto la sua capacità di ascolto, a volte anche sviluppata con anni di formazione professionale, a *setting* precisi, di tipo psicoterapico, spesso in ambito privato, mentre nell'intervento territoriale e ancora di

più in quello dei servizi di diagnosi e cura questa capacità arriva quasi a scomparire come ben dimostrato dalla generale povertà delle notizie anamnestiche riportate nelle cartelle cliniche. Si sta rischiando così di riproporre, in un ambito non manicomiale, gli stessi percorsi di destoricizzazione così tanto criticati. E' forte, quindi, il bisogno che anche nella psichiatria di tutti i giorni, quella povera, quella dei malati cronici, della porta girevole e ancor di più per gli esordi, si raccolga almeno la storia del paziente, anche quello psichiatrico, e anche al di fuori di competenze specifiche che, pur possedute dalla classe psichiatrica, non vengono utilizzate. In questo quadro vogliamo segnalare solo alcune attività praticate in psichiatria che, pur rimanendo in un ambito di medicina narrativa, possono assumere delle connotazioni particolari.

Tra gli strumenti narrativi utilizzati con i pazienti psichiatrici, una menzione particolare la merita la scrittura autobiografica e creativa che viene utilizzata per consentire ai pazienti di raccontarsi in un modo molto intimo e personale e, nello stesso tempo, favorisce la riflessione su ciò che è cambiato a causa della malattia, su come si sono modificate le relazioni con gli altri e la visione di se stessi. Inoltre, la scrittura autobiografica, con il suo potere ricompositivo, permette di fare ordine nei propri ricordi favorendo il processo di cura. Anche in questo caso, appare evidente come il confine tra una vera e propria "psicoterapia" narrativa ed un uso "normale" della narrazione dipenda molto dalla profondità dell'intervento e soprattutto dalla competenza e capacità di chi gestisce la narrazione.

Altri strumenti particolarmente cari alla psichiatria sono le arti esppressive quali cinema, letteratura, pittura, teatro e musica. Se solo di recente è possibile ritrovare a vario titolo la presenza di artisti in contesti sanitari, per la psichiatria questa è una tradizione ormai consolidata che va ben oltre il luogo comune dell'associazione arte e follia.

Il problema della comunicazione in psichiatria ha avuto sempre un ruolo centrale essendo presente in ogni disturbo psichiatrico sotto forma di distorsioni della realtà, carenze, deliri, ecc ... Per questa

ragione, si è reso da sempre necessario il ricorso a tecniche che potevano favorire e migliorare la comunicazione facendo leva proprio sulle arti espressive quali canali alternativi di comunicazione capaci di riuscire a superare l'ostilità del paziente psichiatrico permettendo una sua partecipazione emotiva profonda, immediata e coinvolgente. In particolare, il cinema ha da sempre mostrato un notevole interesse per la medicina e soprattutto per la psichiatria, che ne costituisce un vero e proprio filone con diverse declinazioni al suo interno in funzione anche dei contesti storici di partenza.

La narrazione cinematografica ha il potere di “insinuarsi distrattamente nella mente dell'osservatore, producendo delle modificazioni nel suo stato d'animo e nel pensiero. Nella situazione cinematografica agiscono delle dinamiche psicologiche che influenzano la percezione, la comprensione e la partecipazione degli spettatori, determinando l'immedesimazione o la distanza dagli eventi rappresentati” (Benjamin 1991), avendo così la possibilità di cogliere degli aspetti che difficilmente sarebbero affiorati.

La psichiatria, nel cinema, viene raccontata mettendo in luce la sua anima poliedrica, talora invasiva, altre volte grottesca e buffa, fino a giungere ai nostri giorni in cui è stato posto in risalto il suo aspetto più riabilitativo e umano; a tale proposito, nella cinematografia italiana, va annoverato, in particolare, *C'era una volta la città dei matti* (2010). Pur non essendo questo l'ambito per una trattazione approfondita di questi aspetti, va segnalato il particolare valore di questo film che ricostruisce tutta la storia degli ultimi anni dell'istituzione manicomiale in Italia fino al giorno della promulgazione della legge 180. Caratteristica particolare del film è quella di proporre il grande cambiamento culturale di quegli anni attraverso la ricostruzione delle storie dei protagonisti nel perfetto stile della medicina narrativa, attenta cioè, non solo alla storia clinica del paziente, ma anche alla sua storia di vita e di quella delle persone che gli stanno intorno come familiari, medici, vicini di casa e società in senso

lato. Secondo questa metodologia “narrativa”, le storie personali e professionali di medici come Basaglia e degli altri operatori sanitari come la moglie o gli infermieri, intrecciano le loro storie con quelle dei pazienti come quella di Margherita, la ragazza che, dall’Istituto di suore, viene ricoverata al manicomio per banali problemi comportamentali, e attraverso diverse vicissitudini passa dal degrado profondo che l’istituzione totale può dare ad una riappropriazione della propria vita anche mediante una ricostruzione della storia del rapporto con la madre. Ci piace ricordare anche la storia di Boris, paziente con il disturbo post-traumatico da stress (e già solo la definizione fa emergere il limite dell’uso della diagnosi per definire una persona) che permette di ricostruire non solo la storia individuale dal letto di contenzione occupato per anni alla realizzazione affettiva e professionale, ma anche quella di un intero popolo, quello dell’Istria, nel dopoguerra. E così ancora tante altre storie che proprio mediante la presenza di riferimenti biografici, anche della quotidianità, fanno emergere delle “persone” dalla massa indistinta, amorfa dei “malati di mente” all’interno di quel contenitore unico, destorizzante, che era il manicomio. Infine, il film rappresenta un’ottima occasione di denuncia per il grave danno arrecato dalle istituzioni totali che sono riuscite negli anni, al di là delle buone intenzioni iniziali, a trasformare il prendersi cura, non solo in intrattenimento, ma a fare raggiungere gli abissi più profondi del degrado dell’essere umano.

Un altro film di grandissimo spessore, che utilizza la storia del “paziente” come fulcro narrativo è *Frances* (1982). La storia della paziente si sviluppa dai primi capricci di attrice di successo fino alla lobotomia, passando per tutte le tappe intermedie degli interventi psichiatrici privati di grande livello a quelli sempre più scadenti dell’istituzione pubblica comprendenti anche la vendita del corpo per pochi dollari e dove la lobotomia finale rappresenta l’esempio concreto dell’annullamento della persona.

Questi film si inseriscono perfettamente, con le peculiarità descritte, all'interno del filone cinematografico che in diverse occasioni ha proposto la rappresentazione del manicomio, spesso raccontato in maniera negativa, ponendo l'accento sulla sua essenza punitiva quale strumento di repressione sociale contro la follia (intesa non soltanto dal punto di vista medico-psichiatrico, ma anche come forma di sregolatezza, genialità e di ribellione al conformismo) che impiega terapie atroci come l'elettroshock, la lobotomia o lo shock insulinico. Alcuni esempi sono *Qualcuno volò sul nido del cuculo* (1975), *Ragazze interrotte* (1999), *La pecora nera* (2010), ove l'immagine del manicomio assume sfumature diverse. Ricordiamo come migliaia di pratiche invasive non toccano l'opinione pubblica come può invece fare il racconto di una singola storia. Più di recente, il cambiamento della psichiatria moderna, sia con le sue maggiori potenzialità terapeutiche attraverso gli psicofarmaci, sia attraverso gli approfondimenti delle tecniche psicoterapiche e, infine, con l'organizzarsi in maniera capillare degli assetti riabilitativi, è stato rappresentato in numerosi forme aventi quasi tutte in comune il superamento dello stigma e il messaggio estremamente positivo che la malattia mentale può guarire o che comunque è possibile convivere con essa mantenendo una qualità di vita accettabile. Altro merito attribuibile alla cinematografia, in linea con la medicina narrativa, è quello della rappresentazione delle altre figure che ruotano attorno al paziente come la sua famiglia, i medici e gli operatori sanitari in genere.

La figura dello psichiatra viene presentata ricorrendo all'uso degli stereotipi, dal personaggio cattivo, detentore di poteri manipolatori per danneggiare le menti, a volte anche torvo e persino criminale come ne *Il silenzio degli innocenti* (1991), oppure, al contrario, lo psichiatra imbranato e ridicolo, oggetto di scherno come in *Tutte le manie di Bob* (1991), in *Caruso Pascovski (di padre polacco)* (1988), e in *Terapia e pallottole* (1998). Non mancano però rappre-

sentazioni cinematografiche a carattere biografico che permettono di andare oltre gli stereotipi convenzionali.

Sarebbe forte la tentazione di continuare a trarre spunti concreti dalla cinematografia più recente, ma crediamo sia sufficiente in questa sede concludere ribadendo l'importanza della cinematografia che, fra le arti espressive, sempre molto utilizzate in psichiatria, rappresenta forse quella più completa e fruibile. Il cinema diventa un potente strumento di narrazione a fini didattici per medici, operatori sanitari, pazienti, caregiver e opinione pubblica generale poiché, attraverso l'osservazione diretta di storie verosimili e vere (*A beautiful mind* è l'esempio più conosciuto), permette di ben comprendere le varie dinamiche in gioco, di riflettere sui vissuti esperienziali di tutti i soggetti, sul *modus operandi*, di confrontarsi e di prendere spunto per la prassi quotidiana. L'inclusione delle competenze narrative nella formazione, nella ricerca e nella pratica psichiatrica fornisce gli strumenti necessari per mantenere e sviluppare l'empatia, un ascolto più attento e una relazione più efficace come strumento di cura del paziente.

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Postfazione/*postface*

IL SIGNIFICATO DELLE CURE NELLA PERSONA ANZIANA
LA PRESA IN CARICO NON RICONOSCE
FRAMMENTAZIONI

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SUMMARY

This paper describes the most important points regulating old person care. A precondition is the evaluation of complexity as a structural characteristic since aging involves many different domains (somatic, psychological, socio-economical) strictly interacting. The paper discusses also the differences between the traditional approach of “cure” and that of “caring”, since only the latter allows a real long time follow up of frail subjects and the possibility of assuring a good quality of life in the late ages. Moreover, caring the elderly with health problems is grounded on the capability to mediate to different approaches, ie “precision medicine” and “personalized medicine”.

La signora Anna ha 85 anni, entra in ambulatorio con passo insicuro, si toglie il soprabito e con altrettanta incertezza l’appende all’attaccapanni; è accompagnata dalla figlia che entra dopo di lei. Capelli corti grigi, ben pettinati, porta un paio di occhiali leggeri, la maglia di cachemire dello stesso colore rosso ciliegia del rossetto; sorride con gentilezza. Si siede. Qual è il motivo della visita? Qualcosa di nuovo, di particolare? La risposta è “si e no”. Riferisce il riacutizzarsi del dolore alla schiena, ne soffre da alcuni anni, e quando si fa sentire le diventa

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difficile e faticosissimo alzarsi dal letto; talora le si gonfiano le dita delle mani, ma da un paio di giorni le cose vanno lievemente meglio. In passato è stata operata di protesi a entrambe le ginocchia.

In mano ha un foglio con la lista dei farmaci, dice di avere la pressione alta, “da stress”. Soffre di glaucoma e deve essere controllata dall’oculista ogni quattro mesi. Non ha mai avuto problemi di “tenuta”, ma ultimamente riferisce di aver iniziato a mettere un salvaslip per precauzione. Cinque anni fa è stata operata per un cancro del colon e da poco è comparso un nodulo polmonare, probabilmente sospetto. Vive sola, con un cagnolino di undici anni, in un appartamento di grandi dimensioni a nord della città. Suo marito, medio imprenditore è morto di cancro più di vent’anni fa. Non guida l’auto da almeno cinque anni. Esce di casa ogni giorno per fare le piccole spese; per quelle importanti, e per i lavori di casa pesanti, l’aiuta la figlia che passa a trovarla o le telefona tutti i giorni. Per il resto, per le piccole attività ordinarie, dice di non aver bisogno di nessun aiuto. Ha lavorato come ragioniera sino alla pensione e anche dopo per qualche anno si è mantenuta attiva aiutando la figlia nella contabilità di un piccolo esercizio.

Le chiedo se posso visitarla e l’aiuto a salire sul lettino. Lo fa con fatica. Ausculto cuore e polmoni, palpo l’addome, provo la pressione. La muscolatura è poco trofica. Le mani sono ben curate, non altrettanto i piedi. “Chi le taglia le unghie?”. “Io” mi risponde.

Le chiedo di raccontarmi in dettaglio la sua giornata. Si sveglia e si alza prima delle sei, dice di non aver bisogno di molte ore di sonno e pure che la sua schiena non le permetterebbe di stare più ore sdraiata. Si lava e si veste. Prende le medicine del mattino, prepara da mangiare al cane e fa colazione. Caffelatte e pane. Mangia anche una banana, sebbene a lei le banane non le piacciono, ma le hanno detto che sono ricche di potassio, che fa molto bene. Dopo colazione esce con il cane per una passeggiata di circa mezz’ora. Quando rientra, mette in ordine la camera e sbrigava le poche faccende domestiche. Poi

guarda la televisione fino mezzogiorno. A pranzo prepara o un primo o un secondo e beve mezzo bicchiere di vino.

Quando il tempo lo permette, dopo il sonnellino pomeridiano, sta un po' in giardino. Il pomeriggio è lungo e lento, fa ancora qualche lavoro domestico, esce per un'altra passeggiata col cane, qualche telefonata e poi prepara la cena, di solito una minestra e un frutto. Poi guarda la tv e circa a mezzanotte va a letto.

Rileggo con attenzione la sua scheda e preparo il referto della vista cercando di fare un triage dei problemi cui andrà incontro: le conseguenze della probabile ripresa di malattia, i.e. la metastasi polmonare, la progressiva e imminente riduzione dell'autosufficienza a causa dell'artrosi, l'incontinenza, ma soprattutto le cadute. Prende cinque medicine al giorno e non mi pare che assuma tutte le calorie necessarie. Apparentemente sembra stia bene, ma alla prima caduta la sua vita cambierà in modo drammatico (frattura di femore o di bacino, paura di cadere ... il suo attuale grado di autosufficienza sarà perso e non potrà più vivere da sola). Inizierà l'inarrestabile discesa verso il termine della vita.

Dopo più di mezz'ora di visita ci salutiamo, programmando il prossimo appuntamento fra sei mesi.

Nel tratto di strada che mi porta a casa rivedo la giornata intensa trascorsa, e rifletto su come sono cambiati con gli anni i pazienti e il mio modo di fare il medico.

Dopo cena apro il libro che mi sono ripromesso di terminare in settimana (Flannery O'Connor "Nel territorio del diavolo. Sul mistero di scrivere". Minimum fax, 2010). A pagina 42, la O'Connor, che sta tenendo una lezione sullo "scrivere" in una università statunitense dice:

Non c'è frase di Madame Bovary che, esaminata, non desti meraviglia, ma ce n'è una in particolare davanti alla quale mi fermo ammirata. Flaubert ci ha appena mostrato Emma al piano, con Charles che la guarda. Dice: "Batteva sui tasti con disinvolta percorrendo senza posa la tastiera, da un'estremità all'altra. Così scosso, il vecchio strumento, con le corde che vibravano, si faceva sentire fino in fondo al paese quando la finestra era

aperta, e spesso lo scrivano del balivo, passando per la via principale, a capo scoperto e in pantofole di pezza, si fermava in ascolto, il foglio di carta fra le mani". Più si guarda una frase come questa e più c'è da imparare. A un estremo siamo con Emma e questo tangibilissimo strumento, "con le corde che vibravano", e all'altro siamo in fondo al paese con questo scrivano in pantofole di pezza. Considerando quanto accade a Emma nel resto del romanzo, potemmo pensare che non faccia alcuna differenza se lo strumento ha le corde vibranti o lo scrivano è in pantofole di pezza e ha un foglio di carta fra le mani, ma Flaubert doveva creare un paese credibile dove collocare Emma. Non va mai dimenticato che cura immediata dello scrittore di narrativa non sono tanto idee grandiose ed emozioni tumultuose, quanto infilare pantofole di pezza agli scrivani.

Ripenso alla paziente del pomeriggio, alla signora Anna. Avrò raccolto adeguatamente la sua storia? Sono in grado di collocare la malattia di cui soffre nel quadro d'insieme della sua vita; le informazioni cercate hanno a che fare con la sola condizione virtuale di malattia, non incarnata e pressoché inutile, o mi permetteranno invece di essere concretamente d'aiuto?

Il compito di chi cura è considerare quanto il paziente rimarrà libero dalla malattia, fare in modo che questo avvenga per più tempo possibile e favorire l'autosufficienza, affinché la persona possa vivere attivamente nel proprio mondo. Spesso le malattie sono trattate asetticamente, assumendo che il resto avvenga per moto proprio. Ma così non è: la dipendenza e la disabilità hanno precisi correlati che affondano le radici nella malattia, nelle malattie, nelle motivazioni e nelle aspettative, nelle condizioni sociali ed economiche del paziente e in ragione di queste possono rimanere solo un timore o diventare sbocco ineludibile, con l'istituzionalizzazione come regola. Invece la presa in carico complessiva dei diversi problemi che provocano sofferenza e perdita dell'autonomia può fare la differenza; è un'impresa difficile sul piano culturale e pratico, ma i risultati raggiungibili nell'anziano fragile, come è stato ampiamente dimostrato, rendono irrinunciabile l'adozione di questa prassi clinica.

Tenendo questa descrizione sullo sfondo, come concreta problematica clinica, di seguito sono trattati alcuni punti di riferimento per una cura possibile. La vecchiaia rappresenta un modello significativo sul quale analizzare le modalità di approccio alla persona di qualsiasi età: è infatti un ambito nel quale le difficoltà si presentano in modo maggiormente evidente e quindi si presta ad analisi approfondite. In premessa ad ogni considerazione sul concetto di cura è necessario riconoscere che la salute dell'anziano è inquadrabile in un sistema regolato secondo il modello della complessità. "Il caso, la contingenza, la singolarità, la località, la temporalità, la rivedibilità, il disordine": sono le categorie che Morin colloca alla base di ogni conoscenza delle dinamiche del mondo reale. La medicina che vuole realmente curare deve accettare che ogni caso è originale, dipende dal tempo e dalla storia (che sono biologia e vita allo stesso tempo), è indotto da mille condizioni diverse che interagiscono, continuando a cambiare, spesso in modo non prevedibile. La risposta di cura deve accettare il proprio limite davanti ai molti fattori di incertezza; deve accettare la crisi dell'onniscienza, che in passato aveva ipotizzato di poter rispondere a tutte le condizioni di difficoltà della persona. Deve accettare anche la rivedibilità delle decisioni cliniche, il loro continuo adattamento alla vita della persona da curare, che ad ogni età è modificabile e instabile.

La complessità come caratteristica strutturale della cura della persona anziana

La vita è caratterizzata da fattori multipli che interagiscono in modo imprevedibile. Gli eventi complessi possono essere così riassunti: i sistemi vitali costituiscono una realtà unitaria, che supera la comprensione delle singole parti; il sistema prevede la valutazione contemporanea delle sue componenti, senza seguire regole gerarchiche; il sistema non segue comportamenti lineari ed è continuamente perturbato dalla comparsa di nuove situazioni od eventi. La semplifica-

zione non appartiene quindi alle modalità corrette per affrontare le tematiche della salute e della malattia ad ogni età, in particolare in quella avanzata; di conseguenza anche la formazione degli operatori deve incentrarsi sulla complessità come strumento di lettura di ogni situazione clinica (il tutto spesso in controtendenza con le richieste dei pazienti stessi, educati dalla pressione commerciale a richiedere interventi con uno stretto rapporto azione-effetto, peraltro il più delle volte inesistente). Sul tema della formazione clinica degli operatori vi sarebbe l'esigenza di un ripensamento radicale; purtroppo, invece, si incontra una forte e diffusa resistenza corporativa da parte di istituzioni che incentrano il loro potere sulle competenze acquisite, ritenute non mediabili rispetto a contenuti formativi più integrati.

Medicina della complessità: potrebbe essere il nuovo nome della cura, alla luce del progresso delle conoscenze sul piano tecnico-scientifico e metodologico e su quello culturale. E' la cura che affronta i problemi della persona che presenta molti differenti bisogni, sempre caratterizzati da sofferenza, senza la possibilità di costruire gerarchie o rapporti di causa-effetto; medicina nella complessità significa in particolare curare con determinazione, anche quando sembrerebbe che troppi fattori interagiscono con l'atto stesso e la sua potenziale efficacia. Ne discendono modelli di cura che intervengono agendo sulla realtà costituita dalla prospettiva biologica e personale del paziente e da quella culturale e psicologica del medico; le possibilità di successo sono date dalla capacità di leggere le dinamiche vitali di chi soffre senza preconcetti, con la necessaria capacità di adattamento e di "trascinare" le indicazioni della medicina formalizzata all'interno di una situazione assolutamente peculiare.

Il tutto talvolta richiede coraggio, perché apparentemente si agisce "fuori dalla regole", che sempre svolgono una funzione protettiva per gli operatori sanitari, anche se spesso in ambito clinico inducono un "addormentamento" della capacità realistica di curare qui e ora.

Quali sono gli eventi che concorrono all'instabilità e all'evoluzione del fenotipo complesso, la condizione umana che si esprime nel tempo attraverso continue differenziazioni, sotto l'azione di determinanti plurime che ne controllano l'evoluzione? Una particolare attenzione deve essere data alla genetica, che si sta liberando dalle interpretazioni rigide del passato (che non hanno portato reali vantaggi alla conoscenza dell'individuo sul quale operare interventi di cura), per costruire la base teorica di un fenotipo che continua a differenziarsi attraverso l'interazione tra la molteplicità dei geni e gli atti della vita. La crisi della visione genomacentrica non ha ancora portato a modelli che permettano di ricostruire l'evoluzione nel tempo delle varie componenti biologiche e biografiche di un individuo sano o malato per arrivare a predisporre interventi mirati. L'incompiutezza tiene aperti i "giochi" della biologia e della vita. È quindi necessario arrivare ad una relativa sistematizzazione, per evitare che alle rigidità del passato si sostituiscano ipotesi vitalistiche, apparentemente affascinanti, ma non di vero aiuto nella prassi di cura. La scienza deve produrre risultati che nel tempo inducono rilevanti progressi, il cui scopo finale è meglio comprendere i meccanismi e i percorsi dell'instabilità.

Le evidenti difficoltà della visione genomacentrica, cioè dell'illusione (potremmo chiamarla "speranza non affidabile") di capire/prevedere tutto, impongono nuove centralità e la ricomposizione della frammentazione. E' allora necessario indagare quali possono essere i contributi in questa direzione delle discipline mediche e psicologiche (ma anche antropologiche e sociali) nei processi di personalizzazione: la psicopatologia classica, cioè capire per cambiare; le neuroscienze moderne, tra prevedibilità ed imprevisto; la psicoanalisi e le psicologie dinamiche, con la centralità di fattori costruttori/decostruttori (prima l'Edipo, oggi il trauma); la psicologia della salute, nella sua moderna accezione e sviluppo clinico (fattori di protezione e resilienza)? Ma anche la medicina somatica, non frammentata dagli

specialisti, con la sua visione del corpo e del suo funzionamento, e la costruzione della dimensione clinica (segni, linguaggi, sguardi, ipotesi, prove...), fatta di rapporti corporei e di relazioni.

Questa ricerca del collante segnerà il futuro delle discipline che si occupano della salute della persona e del loro contributo alla personalizzazione delle cure in tutte le fasi della vita: i bambini, i giovani, i vecchi, la medicina di genere, i fattori sociali che attivano processi di sofferenza e patologia (il mondo del lavoro, la crisi economica, l'insicurezza, la paura e le perdite, il futuro come minaccia, la crisi della identità personale...).

Alcune dimensioni dell'atto di cura

Nell'impostare un atto di cura si devono tenere in evidenza alcune caratteristiche di fondo, in grado di dargli significato e di renderlo efficace. La prima delle quali è la dimensione della speranza. Un futuro aperto all'evoluzione può essere plasmato attraverso azioni diverse sia da parte dell'individuo stesso, sia da parte di interventi esterni, tra i quali si collocano anche le cure sul piano clinico. La speranza deve ispirare sia l'atto della cura che la vita di chi riceve le cure. Ciò richiede un'educazione degli operatori e dei cittadini, spesso tendenti a riporre fiducia su un singolo procedimento, che interferisce con un meccanismo biologico alterato in maniera meccanicistica, e non su interventi plurimi, che nell'insieme concorrono all'evoluzione della storia individuale della persona oggetto di cure. La speranza è il segno di una medicina che ipotizza lo sviluppo continuo della persona, con particolare riferimento al processo di invecchiamento. In questo senso diventa "speranza affidabile".

Un'altra problematica è costituita dalla dimensione dell'importanza del "fare bene", termine apparentemente non clinico, ma che indica la costruzione di processi che si ispirano alla prassi della medicina basata sulle evidenze e della medicina narrativa. L'uso di modelli di cura standardizzati (le linee guida) non si presta a rispondere ad un bisogno che si modifica e che vede in gioco molti

fattori, non frammentabili; ma la medicina non ha ancora messo a punto strumenti alternativi che possano guidare le cure secondo queste indicazioni. Un fenotipo in continua evoluzione richiede atti fortemente interconnessi tra di loro, evitando ripetizioni, discontinuità, scarsa prospettiva temporale; si deve rinunciare a inseguire un obiettivo di cura che sfugge nel momento stesso nel quale viene messo in essere. Il fare bene rispondendo realisticamente al bisogno significa mettere in atto un accompagnamento sensibile, intelligente e senza interruzioni.

Questi approcci nel loro insieme aprono ad una mentalità “estetica” da parte di chi abbia a che fare la cura, mentalità che induce a guardare il mondo in una prospettiva evolutiva, priva di rigidità, aperta al non prevedibile, in grado di cogliere attraverso tutti i sensi ogni dinamica di qualsiasi dimensione che accompagna la vita dell’individuo. L’osservazione del fenotipo umano instabile deve essere condotta con libertà nell’interpretare il ruolo delle singole determinanti della condizione. La constatazione che la scienza non è sufficiente per capire la realtà non deve però portare ad atteggiamenti rinunciatari o banalmente pessimistici, ma, anzi, spronare a costruire ponti che giovano sia alla scienza, che deve andare avanti, sia alla clinica intesa in senso integrato. È necessario in questa logica analizzare anche le componenti della medicina tradizionale per indurre un cambiamento volto ad offrire una visione integrata del mondo della persona che soffre (un processo, tra l’altro, necessario per coinvolgere il complesso del sistema formale e ufficiale della medicina). In questa prospettiva va reinterpretato il concetto di evidenza, che non è patrimonio solo degli studi scientifici (peraltro spesso fortemente dipendenti dalle condizioni nelle quali vengono realizzati), ma entra anche nelle dinamiche interpersonali, che producono “evidenze umane” nel momento stesso in cui avvengono.

Il concetto di “mondo reale” rappresenta un passo avanti, perché unifica gli aspetti scientifici e quelli relazionali in una visione com-

plessiva, senza avvicinamenti artificiali, sempre aperti al rischio di forzature, ma anche senza separatezze teoriche frutto di una scienza sorda alla ricchezza del reale (cioè della natura).

L’evoluzione complessiva dello scenario culturale, fondato sulla realtà del fenotipo complesso in continua modificazione, porta alla costruzione di un atto di cura che pone al centro la personalizzazione, come risposta mirata ed adeguata al bisogno del singolo. Quindi l’itinerario: “riconoscimento della complessità della condizione di chi riceve le cure-lettura del fenotipo instabile-continuo adattamento delle cure ad una vita complessa e instabile” porta a interventi che interpretano il valore del singolo come centro di qualsiasi atto, il cui rispetto sul piano clinico, prima ancora che umano, è alla base di ogni atto che voglia raggiungere un livello adeguato di efficacia. In questa logica le affermazioni sulla “centralità della persona malata” rischiano di banalizzare il principio sottostante che non è un’alternativa più o meno significativa, ma l’unica via percorribile (peraltro questi concetti non sono per nulla nuovi, perché già presenti nel pensiero clinico da Ippocrate a Osler; quest’ultimo più di cento anni fa dichiarava che “è molto più importante conoscere che paziente ha una certa malattia rispetto a conoscere che malattia ha un certo paziente”). Storicamente il concetto di umanizzazione ha avuto una valenza etica e non strutturale ad un atto di cura mirato a riconoscere la personalizzazione; non ha quindi contribuito a modificare alla radice il pensiero e la prassi della medicina.

La personalizzazione della medicina fa anche i conti con la possibilità di smontare le certezze diagnostiche strumentali, così come si sono irrazionalmente costruite in tempi recenti, ricomponendo in un processo virtuoso le spiegazioni e i dubbi. Molti criteri standardizzati hanno non pochi “bias”; fare diagnosi diventa un processo di omologazione piuttosto che di differenziazione. La diagnosi viene fatta spesso guardando gli esami diagnostici e non guardando la persona (la perdita dello sguardo, non solo clinico).

La cura tra “precision medicine” e “personalized medicine”

Da qualche tempo è molto vivace il dibattito nella letteratura scientifica tra la prospettiva fortemente sostenuta dal Presidente Obama, che ha lanciato e finanziato una grande campagna a favore della “precision medicine”, e chi sostiene che la cura, per essere davvero adeguata al bisogno del singolo individuo, deve inglobare i dati della medicina di precisione, indispensabili per conoscere le dinamiche biologiche che caratterizzano il singolo, all’interno di una prospettiva più complessa e quindi essere, allo stesso tempo, tecnica e relazione. Ma a questo punto è legittimo e doveroso porsi l’interrogativo su come è possibile ipotizzare la costruzione di atti di cura non generici, ma indirizzati al bisogno del singolo, non puntiformi, ma che garantiscono un accompagnamento adeguato al modificarsi delle condizioni vitali, legati al raggiungimento di un risultato e non incentrati in modo autoreferenziale sulle proprie procedure. Tali atti hanno anche la possibilità di essere controllabili sul piano dei costi e del loro rapporto con i benefici. Si devono correre tutti i rischi che il cambiamento impone, sapendo che la scommessa può essere vinta, con vantaggio per la persona sofferente che trova in atti di cura rinnovati una risposta soggettivamente e oggettivamente esaustiva, che si fonda e supera la medicina cosiddetta scientifica, valorizzandone allo stesso tempo l’enorme quantità/qualità di capacità cliniche.

Alcune tematiche indicano come la cura per essere innovativa deve comprendere l’evoluzione avvenuta nella struttura stessa del bisogno e nelle modalità di risposta messe in atto dalla società contemporanea. La diagnosi e la prognosi hanno cambiato profondamente la loro metodologia, in conseguenza del successo raggiunto negli ultimi decenni dalle tecnologie di imaging, biochimiche e genetiche. Il tutto però non è stato ancora integrato in un sistema che permetta di comprendere analiticamente i percorsi vitali del singolo ammalato, in modo di costruire un nuovo modello clinico. Nella persona anziana,

ad esempio, la funzione motoria rappresenta il più forte predittore di sopravvivenza, quasi fosse una sorta di collettore di componenti biologiche e vitali; è un esempio incisivo di come la vita possa essere legata a fattori complessi tra loro interagenti, per molti aspetti ancora da conoscere, che però sarà indispensabile identificare per ottimizzare la capacità di intervento e di cura. Su queste basi si comprende come il fare diagnosi e costruire una prognosi non costituisce un processo di omologazione, ma permette di identificare nel singolo la presenza di un evento patologico che interagisce con la struttura biologica e con la vita dell'individuo stesso, in una modulazione che porta ad un'evoluzione differenziata, che a sua volta determina il bisogno di cure assolutamente unico per quell'individuo. La prognosi deve anche tener conto della capacità di resilienza del singolo individuo, fattore individuale e imprevedibile, che riassume tutta "la misteriosa realtà della vita", cioè la ricchezza dell'esperienza individuale; non deve mai essere scordata nell'analisi clinica una considerazione sulla capacità individuale di vincere la sofferenza e le perdite, al fine di ricostruire un equilibrio, benché difficile.

La presenza contemporanea di molte malattie, ciascuna delle quali segue percorsi propri nel singolo individuo, induce difficoltà nell'applicazione delle linee guida costruite su modelli semplici di patologie affrontate singolarmente. La comorbilità porta ad una forte differenziazione fenotipica dell'ammalato; non ha quindi successo un intervento mirato a rispondere singolarmente ad ognuno dei problemi clinici, perché è l'insieme del sistema in movimento che richiede una risposta. Ma non vi è ancora una seria prospettiva per mettere in rete le problematiche e quindi permettere di compiere scelte mirate. In una condizione così complessa quale spazio va lasciato alle decisioni del paziente e alle scelte che il medico fonda sulla sua esperienza, quest'ultima costruita sulla capacità di mettere assieme tecnica e relazione, in equilibri che continuano a cambiare?

La risposta personalizzata deve considerare non solo i geni (che pure devono essere esaminati attraverso il modello delle loro interazioni), ma anche la storia (la dimensione tempo) e la collocazione nello spazio organizzato. Il problema dell'epigenetica e dei trascrittomi è centrale in questa analisi, anche se mancano gli strumenti interpretativi. Su questa linea le condizioni psicosociali (povertà, solitudine, mancanza di cultura e di ruolo ecc.), che rappresentano rilevanti fattori di rischio di morbilità e mortalità, impongono una conoscenza di come queste hanno modificato la struttura biologica e vitale del soggetto. La medicina centrata sul paziente rispetta le sue scelte e le sue preferenze; come evitare però la nascita di un mondo incontrollabile, che va da internet, alla magia, a culture seppur "nobili" di sopportazione della sofferenza? Come rispettare l'autonomia del paziente e allo stesso tempo produrre atti di cura adeguati? È un'impresa che deve essere caratterizzata da un realismo ottimistico: "realismo" perché disponiamo delle basi tecniche per esercitare una medicina rinnovata, "ottimistico" perché è ancora difficile fondare su queste gli interventi di cura. L'analisi della clinica condotta nel mondo reale ha fatto venire a galla molti dati in contrasto con la diffusa affermazione che tutto va bene perché è "scientifico". Una revisione scientifica condotta con nuovi occhi, dei dati sull'efficacia di interventi diagnostici (l'esempio del PSA nella diagnosi precoce del tumore della prostata) ha portato a profonde revisioni di comportamenti sanitari, il cui risultato primario non è stato il risparmio (che pure è un obiettivo da raggiungere), ma il rispetto del paziente, al quale non vengono imposti atti alla cui definizione non abbia partecipato. Si deve anche evitare che il tema nobile del "less is more" si possa trasformare in un pretesto per una sanità leggera e sostanzialmente frammentata. I dati dell'esperienza confermano che la ricomposizione delle cure e la costruzione di interventi senza rotture attorno ad un bisogno di lunga durata non solo rispondono alle esigenze di chi soffre, ma alla fine portano anche ad una riduzione dei costi. Questa impostazione

è oggi resa più operativa grazie alle nuove tecnologie dell'informazione e della comunicazione, in grado di collegare il bisogno con la risposta in modo assolutamente singolare, evitando ogni possibile dimenticanza e trascuratezza (ovviamente la tecnologia deve arricchire e non svuotare il rapporto, che resta sempre significante tra chi riceve assistenza e chi la fornisce). In questa prospettiva il ruolo degli operatori della salute è la ricerca dell'appropriatezza dei trattamenti e una forte governance clinica (attenta ai risultati, ma anche agli sprechi e ai conflitti di interesse), per non essere travolti dalla governance amministrativa, burocratica e a volte brutale di chi non considera l'insieme dei fattori che concorrono alla cura e alla sua efficacia.

Una sanità che nei prossimi anni sappia risolvere gli interrogativi sopraindicati avrà compiuto un enorme progresso nella capacità di cura: si deve risolvere la dialettica tra la complessità da una parte, che impone di considerare tutte le componenti del sistema persona ammalata e rispetta le differenze, i percorsi incerti, le problematiche difformi, e la ricomposizione dall'altra.

Non ci si può illudere che la dialettica complessità-frammentazione-ricomposizione possa essere presto superata come processo culturale che investe molte aree della vita collettiva e individuale; attraverso queste tensioni però si costruiscono i processi più avanzati della medicina contemporanea. Peraltra il mettere assieme i pezzi consente non solo di curare sul piano tecnico, ma anche di riconoscere il valore della singola persona, di combattere la perdita di significato, di senso e di valore. I due aspetti non sono tra loro separati, perché solo riconoscendo la realtà complessa del singolo individuo si può curare bene e, al contrario, una cura efficace è la base per ridare libertà e dignità a tutta la persona. Una scienza che si assuma la responsabilità di questi percorsi, tenace e modesta, esercitata da attori sensibili, colti e prudenti è la migliore risposta alle esigenze delle donne e degli uomini di oggi, travolti dalle difficoltà, molto spesso incapaci da soli di trovare la strada per il mantenimento o la riconquista della salute.

Tra cura (“cure”) e presa in carico (“caring”)

La medicina trionfante che sperava di risolvere attraverso le leggi dell’evidenza scientifica i problemi posti dalla sofferenza umana deve riconoscere i propri limiti: come costruire un sistema esperto, che possa decidere quali trattamenti deve ricevere un’ipotetica persona di 79 anni, affetta da una malattia respiratoria ostruttiva cronica, da un diabete di tipo 2, osteoporosi, ipertensione, osteoartrite e demenza? La recente apertura della medicina alla logica dei “big data” potrebbe rappresentare una strada vincente (big data è il termine usato per descrivere una raccolta di dati così estesa in termini di volume, velocità e varietà da richiedere tecnologie e modelli analitici specifici per l'estrazione di valore). La raccolta di dati in ogni ambito, con diversi livelli di afferenza rispetto ad uno specifico problema, potrebbe portare a indicazioni importanti anche per la clinica; ma, ugualmente, è necessario che vi sia una guida “intelligente” in grado di fare una sintesi finale. Qualsiasi sia la rivoluzione tecnologica alla quale assisteremo nei prossimi decenni, non si intravvede la possibilità concreta che negli atti di cura possa essere sostituito l’operatore intelligente, colto, generoso, curioso, capace di costruire ponti dove ancora non arrivano le macchine.

Il riconoscimento di evidenti difficoltà non deve indurre ad un pessimismo rinunciatario; il dovere di curare soprattutto le situazioni più dolorose, e quindi le condizioni cliniche ed umane di maggiore fragilità, non permette autocompiacimenti negativi. È necessario mettere in atto interventi profondamente sperimentali nella loro struttura, i quali permettano di ipotizzare una terapia che si avvicini il più possibile al bisogno dell’individuo ammalato, per di più se incapace di compiere scelte per il suo futuro. In questi casi solo un’intensa compassione può evitare il rischio di rapporti asimmetrici nella cura, con possibili atti -anche se mascherati- di violenza.

Ritorna qui, ancora una volta, una caratteristica della cura che sembrava allontanata dall’evoluzione del costume e dell’etica; nell’epoca

delle solitudini non volute, il rapporto intenso e compassionevole tra operatori sanitari, ammalato e famiglia è irrinunciabile. Vi sono eventi particolari, come quello della comunicazione della diagnosi o la constatazione di momenti cruciali nell’evoluzione della storia naturale della malattia, anche rispetto alle possibilità terapeutiche, nei quali il farsi carico da parte degli attori della cura di pesanti responsabilità non significa il ritorno ad un ruolo paternalistico, ma il riconoscimento di un bisogno di supporto che nella rarefazione delle reti relazionali diventa sempre più forte. Nessuna formale e burocratica affermazione di autonomia -figlia dell’illuminismo e del razionalismo- sarà in grado di spiazzare nel rapporto con il paziente la sensibilità di un medico o di un altro operatore che sappia cogliere le complesse condizioni vitali (e quindi anche cliniche) di una persona chiamata a decidere in assenza di personali capacità cognitive adeguate.

Infine una considerazione rispetto al futuro su queste tematiche. La sfida posta dagli studi sulla complessità è di non usare il termine “olistico”, come fosse una risposta semplice, ma trovare le modalità per risegmentarla in porzioni, ciascuna analizzabile e poi riconducibile a logiche di insieme, in un continuo impegno di frammentazione e deframmentazione. È la sfida della postmodernità, che potrà essere vinta solo attraverso il concorrere di competenze diverse, da quella filosofica a quella clinica, a quella psicologica, perché solo così si ricostruisce un sistema di interventi efficaci e rispettosi dell’individualità. I semplificatori, più o meno banali, non hanno spazio culturale in una medicina che risponda ai bisogni dell’uomo contemporaneo. In una prospettiva terapeutica che si ispira al modello della complessità, la logica deve essere quella dei piccoli guadagni, che diventano importanti per la singola persona; è il passaggio -tipico del nostro tempo- dalle affermazioni valide per tutti, all’adattamento concreto degli interventi alla specificità delle condizioni umane e cliniche. Ciò vale in tutte le condizioni patologiche; la cura delle malattie croniche,

che non guariscono e che possono durare per molto tempo è costruita attraverso una sequenza di piccoli guadagni, raggiungibili con atti di attenzione, delicati, precisi. Ma è pronta la nostra società ad accollarsi sacrifici economici per indurre piccoli vantaggi oggettivi, anche se soggettivamente grandi? (non vi potrebbe essere incertezza più tipicamente postmoderna!).

È pronta la società a farsi carico sul piano psicologico, economico, organizzativo di dinamiche complesse, imposte da un accompagnamento di lunga durata? Ancora una volta la capacità di gestire la complessità, cioè interventi diversi che agiscono su target diversi, che però sono sinergici rispetto al risultato finale, è la risposta più adatta ai problemi posti dalle malattie oggi più diffuse.

Lo scenario è ampio, frastagliato, altamente problematico. Solo l'approccio che si colloca nella prospettiva postmoderna permette di avvicinarsi al bisogno reale, quello "umanissimo" indotto dalla sofferenza della carne e della psiche, senza modelli precostituiti, ma guardando con passione e compassione alle crisi che si devono affrontare. La speranza di una cura possibile è affidata alle sensibilità di chi costruisce un intervento "fedele", cioè fondato sulla vicinanza e la comprensione aperta, che sa capire senza giudicare e sa curare in un'opera di continuo, rispettoso adattamento al bisogno, utilizzando sempre, e nel modo più intelligente, quanto viene reso disponibile dal progresso scientifico. "Cure" e "care" non sono quindi in opposizione, e nemmeno possono essere collocate una a fianco dell'altra; si deve invece costruire un modello che preveda una presa in carico che sia lo strumento clinico per mettere in atto una cura di alto valore tecnico. Non è quindi necessario fare ricorso a significati o valori etici, quasi vi fosse la necessità di "iniettare" nuovi contenuti nel processo di curare chi soffre; vi è infatti una sostanziale unità, che deve essere esercitata in ogni momento nel rapporto tra l'operatore sanitario e l'ammalato, i quali vivono in un sistema organizzato che si esprime al massimo livello in questa direzione.

Marco Trabucchi e Renzo Rozzini

In conclusione si deve pensare all'atto di cura come ad un fiume, che scorre dove meglio è permesso dall'ambiente, adattandosi alle condizioni esterne; allo stesso tempo, però, contribuisce a modellare il paesaggio. Cura e prendersi cura sono come lo scorrere di un fiume; atti inseriti in un sistema vitale, che permette all'acqua di inserirsi in un terreno, che a sua volta ne riceve nuova vitalità.

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