

“He told me my pain was in my head”: Testimonial injustice in patient-physician relationships

Marie Vigouroux, Angela Morck and Richard B. Hovey

Volume 11, Number 1S, Supplement, 2024

Congress 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1110239ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v11i1.398>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

McGill University Library

ISSN

2291-918X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Vigouroux, M., Morck, A. & Hovey, R. (2024). “He told me my pain was in my head”: Testimonial injustice in patient-physician relationships. *The International Journal of Whole Person Care*, 11(1S), s17–s18.
<https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v11i1.398>

© Marie Vigouroux, Angela Morck and Richard B. Hovey, 2024



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

"HE TOLD ME MY PAIN WAS IN MY HEAD": TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE IN PATIENT-PHYSICIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Marie Vigouroux^{1,2}, Angela Morck³, Richard B. Hovey³

1*Corresponding author: Department of Integrated Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
marie.vigouroux@mail.mcgill.ca

2 Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies, Faculty of Arts, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

3 Faculty of Dental Medicine and Oral Health Sciences, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Keywords: Women living with chronic pain, Gender-gap in care, Peer support groups, Scoliosis

Women living with chronic pain are more likely than men to experience pain dismissal, receive nonspecific diagnostics, receive fewer follow-ups, have their condition undertreated, and be told that it results from a psychological condition. This is particularly concerning for adolescent girls living with scoliosis, who, given the progressive nature of their condition, require timely diagnosis to allow for less invasive treatment options to be explored. This population is also significantly more likely to have their condition progress to a curve angle where treatment such as bracing or spinal fusion surgery is required, both of which are associated with chronic pain. However, timely diagnosis depends on clinicians taking patients' testimony regarding their health concerns seriously and investigating their claims.

This presentation will dive into the gender gap in care for adolescent girls living with chronic pain caused by scoliosis, focusing on their experiences of pain dismissal and its negative short and long-term effects. Leveraging the concept of intersectionality, the authors argue that adolescent girls may suffer a testimonial injustice when their pain is dismissed by clinicians.

“He told me my pain was in my head”: Testimonial injustice in patient-physician relationships
Marie Vigouroux, Angela Morck, Richard B. Hovey

This presentation will also explore gender-specific peer support groups as a possible mitigating factor to testimonial injustice and other negative outcomes from chronic pain and pain dismissal. The researchers interviewed members from scoliosis peer support group Curvy Girls using open-ended questions, gathering narrative data about their experiences that was subsequently analyzed using an applied philosophical hermeneutics approach, along with intersectionality and testimonial injustice as part of their framework. ■