

Technobonds" – the role of gene-related technologies in the redefinition of "care" and family among cancer patients in Poland

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Abstract:

The growth and implementation of advanced medical technologies create knowledge, social needs, practices and responses. I argue, based on my ethnographic research conducted from 2009 to 2012 in Warsaw and Białystok (Poland), that technologies play a crucial role in the biographies and narratives of people suffering from cancer. This is especially clear when talking with and about a patient's illness with family in the context of gene-related technologies.

In this article, I analyze a body of interviews conducted with the families of cancer patients. Their ideas and beliefs about care, aetiology and the character of disease were strongly medicalized. The definition of family and ties were under a strong influence of new language and technologies derived from gene-related medicine. As a result, "technobonds" – a new definition and representation of family relations can be observed. Technobonds might be perceived as a new form of "internal, familiar care" – a subjective project created by lay people confronted with biomedical knowledge and practices but also with life-challenging emotions like fear and uncertainty.

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