

patients: a socio-anthropological analysis based on cases observed at the CNHU-HKM in Cotonou

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SESSION PAPERS

Care trajectories and experiences of breast cancer patients: a socio-anthropological analysis based on cases observed at the CNHU-HKM in Cotonou
Egnonnam Sandra Dellyla Zannou

The objective of this work was to analyze the factors that influence the medical trajectories of care for patients with breast cancer based on cases observed at the National University Hospital Center Hubert Koutoukou Maga CNHU/HKM. Popular models of illness perception, etiological registers explaining illness, therapeutic registers as well as nosological registers were explored through research. Also the level of knowledge of the disease and the influence of the status of women in family groups on the therapeutic decision and the conditions of management of breast cancer as well as the behaviors that this induces in them and those around them. We opted for a descriptive approach which is similar to the analysis of the discourse of the interlocutors who recount their experiences of breast cancer, their experiences at the level of the hospital institution and outside the latter. The interviews took place from November 2020 to March 2022. It involved people who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the visceral surgery department, in internal medicine, and in external medicine and who were undergoing therapy there; members of their entourage; specialists, paramedics, traditional therapists, members of the SOS Cancer association, pastors. The analysis of the discourse reveals that the representations of the disease and the status of women in their families play on the therapeutic decision in the treatment and legitimize multiple therapeutic recourses in the trajectories. The conditions and the organization of care at the National University Hospital Center contribute to the observed complexity of medical trajectories.

Reimagining Portuguese Digital Healthcare: Future-makers' insights and concerns

José Pinto Da Costa

Healthcare in Portugal is undergoing significant change, shaped by the ongoing integration of digital technologies and evolving expectations about care. This

presentation explores how this transformation is taking place—not as a top-down directive, but through the day-to-day practices, decisions, and interactions of various actors embedded in the system.

Through close engagement with professionals, designers, policymakers, and patients involved in digital health initiatives, the work traces how different logics, constraints, and aspirations come into play. Rather than presenting a singular vision of what healthcare should become, the focus is on mapping how diverse actors engage with, interpret, and respond to unfolding changes. These responses range from enthusiastic adoption to cautious experimentation or quiet resistance and often involve navigating uncertainties, adapting existing roles, and reconfiguring routines.

The presentation also looks at how future-oriented thinking—through prototypes, pilot programs, and strategic frameworks—is being used to test possibilities and explore alternatives. In these settings, speculation becomes a practical tool for managing complexity and making decisions in the present.

By foregrounding the situated experiences and insights of those involved, this exploration sheds light on the multiplicity of healthcare futures currently in the making in Portugal. It highlights not a definitive path but a dynamic process shaped by negotiation, context, and collective improvisation.

Public Health echo chambers: Contested "science" and vaccine denialism on digital platforms

Sanaullah Khan

The increasing deaths caused by Covid-19 and the introduction of new vaccines led to new suspicions and doubts expressed in various ways by online users. Beyond ideas of pseudoscience or irrationality, these suspicions, at least in the digital space can be studied fruitfully by making sense of the ways political polarization permeated the responses of online users on Twitter (now X) where the prevailing attitude to the vaccine became indistinguishable from users' broader political positioning and polarization. This presentation offers an ethnographic perspective into the theory of echo chambers to explore how "science" itself became a debated and contested category, and while some users invoked trust in science to demonstrate their support of vaccines and the responsibility of the state to ensure the health of communities, for opponents, "science" became a political category invoked to represent the entanglement between corporate interests and public health, where good science was differentiated from science on the basis of its respect for "biology" (including a strict gender division) and "nature", as the latter was often invoked by right-leaning users to demonstrate their antagonism for abortion, transgender rights and vaccine profiteering. Understanding these antagonisms shed light on the need to overcome political polarization in shaping attitudes toward vaccines. I argue that the permeation of political polarizations into new aspects of the pandemic reveal a type of "echo-chamber spillover", offering a major challenge to global health security.

Seeing without data: A Case of Dengue Control in Delhi