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Narrative Medicine Assignment
Due February 10th

1. I thought the gorilla in the picture was a fascinating story. We often are looking and trying to seek out what we are expecting to see. This is very similar to the biomedical lens. We try to seek out the first illness that comes to mind and then we treat it. We do not look for background information or try to listen to any stories. We look for it then treat it. This biomedical lens blocks us from seeing the gorilla in the picture. We need to be open minded and ready to be proactive listeners in order to see the gorilla in the picture. By listening it allows us to open our eyes to many possibilities. The biomedical lens is a blockade to many correct diagnoses. Listening is the solution.
2. In health care there can be a culture of hierarchy. These medical professionals are looked at as experts. Therefore, when they see a patient they think they need to do anything possible to come to a diagnosis. However, without listening to stories and truly allowing themselves to be involved in narrative competence this may be an incorrect diagnosis. This is why Jennifer talked about “I don't know” being a beautiful thing. By a medical professional saying that, they are stepping away from the cultural hierarchy. This is beneficial for the patient because the doctor is not rushing to treat them just because they think it is what they must do in their line of work.
3. Just looking into Jennifer's eyes I could tell alot about her. Since she was not very mobile, I had to focus on her facial expressions. You could tell she is an emotional person which made it easier to learn about her as a patient. Every time she talked about her disorder you could see her face just in a sense of dismay. This alone should have been a clue that it was not a psychiatric disorder. There was genuine pain. Her stories of her losing strength should have been a major indicator too. I learned all of this from just listening to her story. So not only do stories give more context but they allow for nonverbal communication. I believe nonverbal communication could fill more gaps between patient and care providers. The medical professionals would be able to actually witness the problem first hand and would lead to a more accurate diagnosis.
4. Jennifer said that the trouble with diagnosing her was that she knew the symptoms she had...but no one could see them. This is where narrative medicine comes into play. If the doctors would have allowed Jennifer to speak of the sequence of events and look at her non verbals, they may have come to a diagnosis quicker. But because the doctors said there was nothing biologically wrong with her, there was a sense of disconnect. This caused Jennifer to feel uncomfortable and not trust her symptoms. She went to a psychiatrist because she believed the doctors that nothing was physically wrong. There was a lack of narrative humility for Jennifer. She was not focusing on her needs when expressing her situation to the doctor. This was due to a lack of narrative competence because the physician was not truly analyzing and listening to Jennifer's story. When

medical professionals and patients both feel that they are in a safe place and just have a conversation, this will lead to more openness which would lead to more prompt and accurate diagnoses.

5. Narrative medicine is a practice that is meant to bridge the gaps in healthcare. If the doctors are truly listening to the patient and experiencing the effects of narrative, they will then be able to translate that to other team members. The doctor may be the one diagnosing them, but it takes a team to treat someone. Looking at the chart from Wolfe et al., 2021 it reminds us why narrative healthcare is so important. There are so many outside factors other than biology that play into an illness. Narrative approaches will help us fill the gaps and learn more about one's lifestyle. For example, you're not going to learn about someone's community/someone's surroundings by looking at their levels. There can be environmental factors in specific areas that may lead to an illness. By listening to the person as a whole this will help with the diagnosis. If everyone is on track with healthy and effective communication styles this will help with the productivity of collaborative healthcare. Overall leading to a smooth operation.