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The limits of medicine: Women's perception of medical technology

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Abstract

This paper develops an analysis of women's perceptions of medical technology and the elements which shape them, and then draws out the implications for medicine and the medicalization thesis. In the first part of the paper we outline the macro-theoretical debates about medicalization and the role of medical technology in this process, and the consequences for those who use health care. The implications for women are given particular attention as they have a higher level of contact with health care than men. We then evaluate the arguments of these macro-theorists against evidence from two ethnographic studies, concerning women patients' and their doctors' attitudes to the use of minor tranquillizers and women's evaluations of medicine and medical practice. This provides a basis for questioning some of the assumptions of the macro-theorists regarding the social relations of medical technology and the medicalization thesis.



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Keywords

women; medical technology; medicalization

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