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Social Issues in Diagnosis: An Introduction for Students and Clinicians

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Diagnosis, the classification tool of medicine, serves an important social role. It confers social status on those who diagnose, and it impacts the social status of those diagnosed. Studying diagnosis from a sociological perspective offers clinicians and students a rich and sometimes provocative view of medicine and the cultures in which it is practiced. *Social Issues in Diagnosis* describes how diagnostic labels and the process of diagnosis are anchored in groups and structures as much as they are in the interactions between patient and doctor.

The sociological perspective is informative, detailed, and different from what medical, nursing, social work, and psychology students?and other professionals who diagnose or work with diagnoses?learn in a pathophysiology or clinical assessment course. It is precisely this difference that should be integral to student and clinician education, enriching the professional experience with improved doctor-patient relationships and potentially better health outcomes.

Chapters are written by both researchers and educators and reviewed by medical advisors. Just as medicine divides disease into diagnostic categories, so have the editors classified the social aspects of diagnosis into discrete areas of reflection, including• Classification of illness• Process of diagnosis• Phenomenon of uncertainty• Diagnostic labels• Discrimination• Challenges to medical authority• Medicalization• Technological influences• Self-diagnosis

Additional chapters by clinicians, including *New York Times* columnist Lisa Sanders, M.D., provide a view from the front line of diagnosis to round out the discussion. Sociology and pre-med students, especially those prepping for the new MCAT section on social and behavioral sciences, will appreciate the discussion questions, glossary of key terms, and CLASSIFY mnemonic.

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