



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the conceptual framework of “humanism” applies to therapeutic landscapes and the study of health geography.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Deliberately choosing a space is important when considering the holistic patient experience throughout the healing process.

Spaces have different cultural meanings and can help add value or meaning to the healing process.

Therapeutic Landscapes in Holistic Medicine

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1998 / Social Science Medicine

Volume 46, Issue 9, Pages 1193-1203

Key Concepts/Context

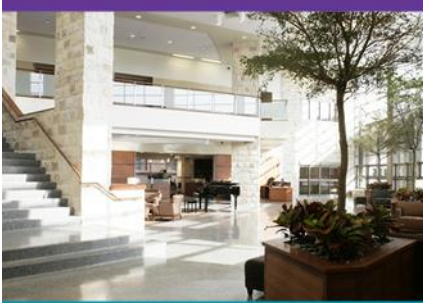
This study looks at the cross-section between humanism (as applied to holistic medicine) and therapeutic landscapes, and analyzes their impact on health and healing.

Therapeutic landscapes are by definition, “changing places, settings, situations, locales and milieus that encompass both the physical and psychological environments associated with treatment or healing.” In simple terms, natural landscapes can play a vital role in the healing of illness. Health programs centered on these ideals are thought to achieve physical, mental, and spiritual healing.

Humanism is defined by this paper as “giving a central and active role to human awareness and human agency, human consciousness and human creativity, and by placing emphasis on the mind’s interpretation of phenomena.” In humanistic geography, the individual is a critical instrument in creating and being influenced by his or her environment and surrounding landscapes.

Holistic medicine is defined as healing practices and beliefs lying outside the western biomedicine model. In the context of holistic model, landscapes are seen as both healing places and places associated with maintaining good health and well-being. Holistic medicine looks not just at healing ailments, but at how good health can be achieved through preventative measures. According to this paper, holistic medicine includes alternative, complementary, and traditional medical practices, including homeopathy, naturopathy, spiritual healing, traditional healing, midwifery, touch therapy, imagery and visualization therapy, and art therapy.

Just as humanistic geographers stress the importance of meaning, value, and experience in understanding the world around them, holistic practitioners also place importance on individual beliefs about health. This paper looks at how



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emphasis on the individual and their interaction with their surroundings can have a unique effect on their health outcomes.

Methods

The paper focuses on humanistic concepts as an approach to holistic medicine and its interaction with therapeutic landscapes in healing.

This paper defines and discusses the following concepts within humanistic geography: (1) Symbolic landscapes (importance of meaning, value, and experience), (2) Sense of place, (3) Authentic and unauthentic landscapes, (4) Landscapes of the mind, and (5) Landscapes as text.

Findings

Symbolic landscapes: Landscapes are thought of as symbolic because they are constructed of cultural images and signs, and the cultural healing symbols found in landscapes are central to the concept of “therapeutic landscapes.”

“Sense of place” allows for better understanding of how people’s psychological rootedness is attached to certain therapeutic environments --for example, holding the belief that the environment holds meaning and significance.

“Authentic and Unauthentic landscapes” define how detached or hands-on a caring environment is. This translates to creating caring environments through human networks of care. Examples include aboriginal hospitals and birthing centers.

Landscapes of the mind include using imagery, such as visualization, to access mental healing environments.

Landscapes as text include using sensory experiences to interpret health conditions.

Limitations

Humanistic discussions often face the criticism that the numerous other structural constraints impacting individual experiences, such as policies, institutions, economics, social structures, social identities, and politics, are not taken into consideration.