

Abstract

Counting Spirits With My Fellow Travellers. Opposing worldviews: Western and Traditional Medicine.

Caryl Carey-Ann Belinda James

This study gives voice to 60 psychiatric patients' understanding of their illnesses as well as their evaluation of treatment received from traditional and western medicine. Thirty western practitioners were also assessed on their attitudes towards patients' use of traditional medicine in treating their illnesses. Psychiatric patients expressed that treatment received from western medicine resulted in feelings of entrapment and lack of acknowledgment of their personhood. There was also a prevalent belief among patients of the supernatural being the cause of their illnesses. Despite patients' positive evaluation of traditional medicine, western practitioners were more inclined to negatively evaluate this form of treatment. The findings have implications for practice as patients' feelings of being unacknowledged or not included in their treatment results in dissatisfaction with the service provided by western medicine.

Keywords: Caryl C.B. James; western biomedical medicine; traditional medicine; worldview; patients; Jamaica; supernatural; storied lives; spirits.