

Ethics after Hours



Unrest Documentary

Summary¹

Jennifer Brea suffers from myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). In this documentary Jennifer and her husband Omar share their journey as they try to come to terms with this potentially lifelong illness. The documentary features stories of patients, who like Jennifer Brea, are confined to their homes or beds by ME, along with interviews with family members and with medical providers and scientists who have dedicated their careers to fighting for patients with this debilitating condition. Unrest was launched in the fall of 2017 along with the global campaign 'Time to unrest', which aims to raise general awareness of ME along with funding for research.

Duration: 1 hr 37 mins.

Director and Producer: Jennifer Brea

Producers: Jennifer Brea, Lindsey Dryden, Patricia E. Gillespie, Deborah Hoffmann, Alysa Nahmias

Released: 2017

Available on Netflix

Questions for discussion:

- What was your initial reaction to this movie?
- ME is a medically contested illness, and some medical practitioners display uncertainty as to whether it is “real”. Many patients share the experience of being met with disbelief by doctors. This is partly due to lack of research into this condition, which was once dismissed as “hysteria”, and partly due to lack of medical education and treatment guidelines. Discuss physicians’ perceptions of ME. How this might influence access to timely and appropriate health care for patients who are diagnosed with ME?
- Do you think the lack of medical knowledge around ME generates an ethical obligation of doctors to communicate the limitations of medicine? In such conditions of uncertainty, should doctors give the patient’s voice more standing in medical decisions around treatment?²

¹ This summary is adapted from the movie website <https://www.unrest.film/>

² Charlotte Blease & Keith Geraghty: Mind the Gap: Ethical Failures in the Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Journal of Medical Ethics Blog, December 6m 2016. <http://blogs.bmj.com/medical-ethics/2016/12/06/mind-the-gap-ethical-failures-in-the-treatment-of-chronic-fatigue-syndrome/>