

CRITIQUING NEUROESSENTIALISM IN PATIENT INTERACTIONS

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NEUROESSENTIALISM

- Neuroessentialism – the conflation of the self with the brain – has pervaded the language of neuroscience¹
- This is largely as a reflection of experimental neuroscience that demonstrates the many ways perception is played out in the brain²
- While scientifically useful, this view is often at odds with individual beliefs and must co-exist in a “bricolage” of contradictory views²



CLINICAL PITFALLS

- Identity-first language is preferred by some patients, and obviously their wishes should be respected
- However, neuroessentialist language often subtly undermines individuality, leading to a damaged personhood of the patient¹
- Undue focus on the brain also tends to particularly reinforce Western ideas of science and philosophy without consideration of other philosophical traditions³



PRAGMATIC APPROACHES

- Centering the person in clinical language has become increasingly accepted as a best practice
- Adoption of person-first clinical language in neurological and psychiatric scenarios allows us to de-center the brain as a way of combatting neuroessentialism
- This allows us to create a landscape that allows for a multiplicity of individual beliefs without infringement, providing better, more personalized care.



REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This work was supported by NIHGM MSTP Training Award T32-GM008444. Also thanks to the Laboratory for Computational Neurodiagnostics (Mujica-Parodi lab) for additional support, as well as the LEND Program at Stony Brook.

