

UBC Department of Philosophy Colloquium

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Epistemic Humility in Medicine

The notions of “expert” and “expertise” imply that some people have more credibility than others on certain matters. In medicine, it is generally accepted that physicians are experts with a superior ability to accurately diagnose patients and determine a range of appropriate solutions for various clinical problems. Nonetheless, recent emphases on patient autonomy and shared decision making in Western bioethics have challenged various paternalistic assumptions in medicine regarding patients’ best interests. There have been increasing calls for clinicians to adopt an attitude of epistemic humility in the therapeutic relationships, to recognize that clinicians’ technical and scientific knowledge may be insufficient in establishing appropriate care plans, and that patients may be the experts of their own circumstances. This presentation explores under what circumstances a professional shift towards epistemic humility is ethically and epistemologically desirable or even required, and when it may be problematic for patient care.

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FRIDAY, March 16th, BUCH A103 4:00 – 6:00

