

Medicine Versus Culture

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Medicine versus culture

In her book, Fadiman talks the tale of little girl named Lia Lee, a child with epilepsy, and her family. Lia's parents did not believe in Western medicine and did not want their daughter to be treated with it. The doctors did not take the time to understand the Hmong culture and did not properly communicate with Lia's parents. As a result, Lia did not receive the treatment she needed, and she died. I believe that Lia's well-being was bound up to those closest to her as they did what they deemed to be best for her condition; the doctors and her parents.

When Lia Lee was born to immigrants who fled to the United States from the Hmong village, their community, the Hmong, were traditionally agricultural people with a history of conflict with the government of Laos. After much political unrest in Laos Hmong fled, where they lived in refugee camps (Fadiman, 2012). They were not familiar with Western medicine and were distrustful of doctors. When Lia was born with severe epilepsy, they were reluctant to seek medical help for her.

The doctors who treated Lia were unfamiliar with the Hmong culture and did not understand the importance of the soul in Hmong cosmology. In Hmong belief, the soul is fragile and can be easily lost. This can happen if the body is not treated with respect, the soul is offended, or the soul is exposed to too much Western medicine (Fadiman, 2012). Western medicine is soul-stealing to the Hmong, and they believe it is best to avoid it if possible. The doctors treating Lia did not understand this belief and did not consider it when they recommended that she be treated with medication and surgery. They did not realize that the Hmong would see these treatments as a threat to Lia's soul. The difference in culture brought about a collision in treatment causing Lia to not receive the best treatment for her condition.

If the doctors had taken the time to understand Lia's condition and to communicate properly with her parents, they would have been able to explain the importance of Western medicine and how it could help Lia. Lia's parents would have been more likely to listen to the doctors and follow their instructions. This would have resulted in Lia receiving the treatment she needed and avoiding the complications that led to her death.

The Lees' unwillingness to accept Western medicine also influenced Lia's ultimate death. They should have been more open to medication and surgery to treat Lia's epilepsy. If they had been, Lia might still be alive today. While the doctors treating Lia did not understand the Hmong culture, I believe that they did their best to provide her with the care she needed. They were not responsible for her death, and I do not think they bear any blame for what happened.

The tragedy of Lia Lee's condition is that it could have been avoided if the Lees had been more willing to work with the doctors and accept Western medicine. Lia's death is a reminder of the importance of cultural understanding and communication in providing medical care.

I believe that the Lees ultimately bear responsibility for what happened to Lia. I think they were too trusting of the doctors and should have been more proactive in ensuring that Lia was getting the care she needed. I also think that they should have been more open to Western medicine and that they should have been more willing to work with the doctors.

'The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down is an important book everyone should read. It reminds us that we all need to be more open-minded and take the time to understand each other. It is also a reminder that Western medicine is not the only medicine. Lia's story is a tragedy, and it is a tragedy that could have been avoided if the doctors and Lia's parents had been more open to communication and understanding.

In conclusion, Lia's parents are responsible for Lia's condition worsening. The doctors did not take the time to understand Lia's condition, and they did not communicate properly with her parents. Lia's parents did not listen to the doctors and did not follow their instructions. However, ultimately, the responsibility for the care and well-being falls on the parents. Lia's condition, in the end, is attributed to her parents' beliefs and culture.

References

Fadiman, A. (2012). *The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. Macmillan.