3 - B: Biopolitical Effects of the Reductive Model

In section two we discussed the ways that the reductive model can create problems for people with connective tissue variations seeking healthcare. Lack of access to care can also have knock on effects for people with variations in connective tissue in other social/political systems. Like the tissues of the body, social/political systems are all connected! Another term for these connections is "intersectionality." For example, when hyperspecialized medicine overlooks a symptom in a body system outside its scope that could delay or even deny someone a diagnosis that could get that person treatment they desperately need. Diagnosis isn't only important for accessing healthcare. A lack of medical acknowledgement of that person's pain and fatigue can limit their ability to secure school and/or workplace accommodations or disability benefits. When people are unable to connect with these other systems of support, it leads to isolation, unemployment, lack of access to education, and poverty. In this way the reductive model of medicine has ripple effects through a wide variety of social/political systems

Here is an even more stark example: some parents of babies with Osteogenisis Imperfecta (brittle bone disease) are accused of child abuse when they come to the ER and the baby has multiple fractures (case example). These families, especially if they are members of marginalized/racialized groups in settler colonial states, may be funneled into what Dorothy Roberts calls the "Family Policing System," lose custody of their children, and face time in prison. If they are wrongfully incarcerated, a criminal record may impede that person's ability to secure employment and provide for their children. In this way the healthcare system is connected to or "intersects" with the policing and prison system. In the case of other connective tissue diseases such as Ehlers Danlos syndromes, the lack of objective evidence of injury, such as a broken bone, can lead to referrals to psychiatry and diagnosis of "factitious disorder" or "conversion disorder" which essentially label the patient as fabricating their symptoms. These diagnoses can be used to involuntarily commit the person (case example), which can be traumatizing in and of itself, but may also lead to the removal of their children by the family policing system, if they are a parent.

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