Module Overview & Outline

Overview

This module includes introductory material about the biology of connective tissue and the extracellular matrix and the role they play in health and wellbeing. Connective Tissue is an excellent example of the ways that scientific paradigms/epistemologies shape the kinds of research questions that are asked, and thus the knowledge that we have about the body.

Because the health sciences have used reductive frames to study the body, addressing each body system in isolation from the others, the connective tissues and extracellular matrix which form the connections between all of the body's systems have been neglected in research. This has significant consequences for people with connective tissue diseases, including variations in connective tissue that produce pain, joint instability, immune problems, and a host of other impairments. The lack of medical/scientific knowledge about connective tissues means that there are a limited number of both knowledgeable medical providers and treatments to improve the wellbeing of people with variations in their connective tissue. This is an example of how scientific paradigms have a direct impact on people's lives.

Because many medical providers have been trained in the reductive model of specialized medicine, many people with variations in connective tissue, who experience problems in many body systems at the same time, are disbelieved about their pain. Moreover, because connective tissue variations often express more in people assigned female at birth, medical misogyny can become an additional barrier to care.Studying connective tissue can help us to see how biology and our social world are so deeply inter-"connected," they should not be treated as separate from one another.

Outline:

1. **Connective Tissue - Healing**
    1. **Connective Tissue in Non-human Species**
    2. **Connective Tissue in Humans**
    3. **Case Study 1 - Healing Dream**
    4. **Discussion Questions/Questions for Reflection**
2. **Variations in Connective Tissue**
    1. **Connective Tissue Variations in Non-human Species - Cats with EDS**
    2. **Humans and Connective Tissue Variations**
    3. **Reductive Model of Medical & Scientific Knowledge**
    4. **Case Study 2 - I Woke Up Like This**
    5. **Discussion Questions/Questions for Reflection**
3. **Connections: Body Systems, Political Systems, Modes of Resistance**

1. **“Co-morbid” conditions**
2. **Biopolitical Effects of the Reductive Model**
3. **Models of Resistance**
4. **Discussion Questions/Questions for Reflection**

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