

House MD: Medical Beneficence vs. Medical Autonomy

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House M.D. uses the consistent lying of patients and a contrasting lecture to further explore the conflict between beneficence and autonomy in medical ethics. Medical autonomy is the ability for a patient to make his or her own decision when it comes to their health. Medical beneficence however, is the doctor's responsibility to maximize the benefits of the patient and minimize the cost. These two parts of medical ethics are constantly in conflict throughout the entire [House](#) series, with the motto of the show being "Everybody Lies". The main character House, with his cynical and untrusting nature, is the ideal doctor to deal with these, sometimes unknowingly deceitful patients. The chosen episode "Three Stories" exhibits this deception of patients with a gripping detective-like story of three patients who all have leg pain, but one of them is lying about the source of the pain.

The main characters of this series consist of House and his fellow co-workers James Wilson, [Lisa Cuddy](#), Eric Foreman, Allison Cameron, and Robert Chase. The more important of these characters being James Wilson, who is Dr. House's only real friend and acts as his conscience in many cases. The typical episode starts with a cold open showing an event outside of the hospital that eventually leads to the symptoms for that week's patient. The team arrives at different basic diagnoses and presents them to House who discounts their findings, claiming them to be missing unconsidered factors. The clues are

missing often because the patient has intentionally or unintentionally lied about the symptoms or circumstances. These factors lead to the patient being misdiagnosed and, in some cases, mistreated multiple times over the episode. This consistent misdirection that...

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... argue. "The world community has deemed individual autonomy to predominate over beneficence in making medical decisions." (Fogoros) House M.D. delves deep into this conflict with the deceitful patients who withhold vital information from the doctors that could lead to a correct diagnosis. The particular episode "Three Stories" shows this conflict through the lecture with House and the contrasting students. The show conveys the idea that beneficence is more important than autonomy but also realizes that this argument is hard to make and reflects that in its episodes.

Works Cited

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