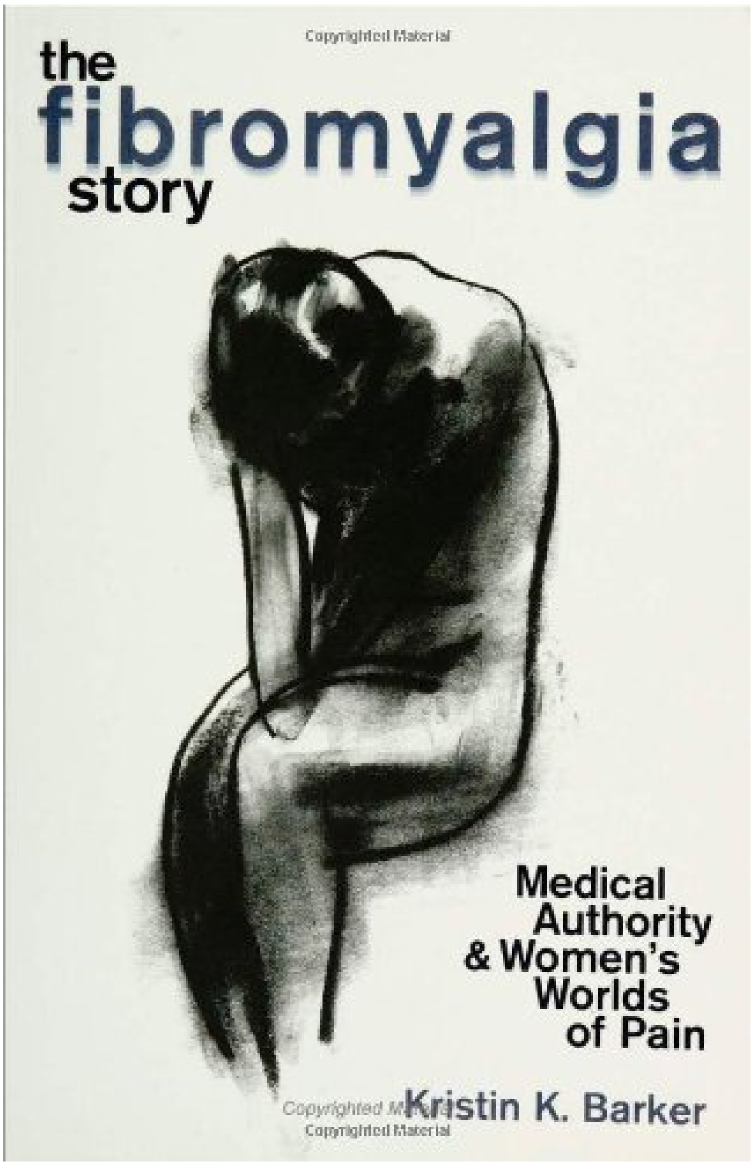
The Fibromyalgia Story: Medical Authority and Women's Worlds of Pain

Kristin Barker



#1202325 in Books Temple University Press 2005-06-30Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .60 x 6.00l, .75 #File Name: 1592131611272 pages | File size: 25.Mb

Kristin Barker : The Fibromyalgia Story: Medical Authority and Women's Worlds of Pain before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fibromyalgia Story: Medical Authority and Women's Worlds of Pain:

0 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Not a fan...By Troy T DeLorenzoVery boring story that is feminism

through and through! Not really about the disease but more of an everyone should feel sorry for women story. Not a fan12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Fibromyalgia patients and their doctors: toward understanding each other.By William SouthworthNow that I am retired from 35 years as a medical doctor (Internal Medicine), I often reflect on what people believe about medicine and illness, and the process by which those beliefs change. As I approached the final years of my career I sought relief from the responsibilities of primary care by limiting my work to disability examinations on those seeking benefits from the Social Security Administration or workers compensation insurers. It was here that I finally found time, free from other distractions, to listen at length to the stories of individuals with diagnoses of fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, Gulf War syndrome, multiple chemical sensitivity, and other problems loosely termed "functional somatic syndromes" in the medical literature. I also examined them and reviewed voluminous medical records. Dr. Barker's account of the subjective experiences of the individuals she interviewed for this book resonates with, and makes clearer, the stories that I heard and described in my reports.In my earlier medical practice, individuals with these problems were difficult and often frustrating to care for because their needs were so great and there seemed so little to offer them from available conventional treatments. On occasion, attempts to relieve their discomfort with pain medications led to substance abuse. One faces the task of distinguishing from among persons with broad arrays of somatic symptoms those individuals who have occult organic illnesses of a more immediately threatening nature, such as cancer or multiple sclerosis. The physician must also be alert for complicating psychiatric problems and for those who simulate symptoms to achieve secondary gain. But once these other problems are excluded by medical investigation, it does not mean that "nothing is wrong," as fibromyalgia patients are often led to believe. Their testimony is often the most significant evidence of their illness, since objectively verifiable signs (verifiable by the examiner, of course) are usually lacking or inconclusive.My educational background prior to my medical training was in engineering. Needless to say, I lacked any exposure to sociology, much less to the concept that illnesses are in part "socially constructed." I recognize now that this was not a trivial deficiency. I highly recommend this book for primary care physicians, rheumatologists, physiatrists, neurologists, and other "evidence-based" specialists likely to care for individuals with fibromyalgia. It should assist health care providers to interact not only with fibromyalgia patients, but with all sufferers from whatever cause, in a more constructive and empathetic way. Fibromyalgia sufferers will gain a more in-depth understanding of their illness, and should find themselves on stronger ground to understand and communicate with their doctors.10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Scholarly Examination of the Social Construction of Medical AuthorityBy anonThis is a highly recommended book, mostly due to its aggressive and thorough examination of FMS as a prime example of the power bestowed to medical authority in Western culture. Whether you believe FMS exists or not, you should buy and read this book.The social construction of reality is a pervasive and powerful concept that shapes every individual's existence--this book provides excellent scholarly analysis of one prime example of the disconnect between individuals' perceptions of reality, while simultaneously illustrating how medicine (and more generally, "scientific knowledge"), even when unable to produce the evidence necessary by its own standards to be unequivocal on an issue, trumps the experienced reality of millions.The theoretical position outlined in this book, backed up with solid historical evidence and extensive interviews, is easily extrapolated to other medical "conditions," daily occurences, gender and cultural roles, wars in the middle east for oil, etc.--I hope that as many people as possible are able to get a copy of this book and mull over the propositions.Awesome work Dr. Kristin Barker.

More than six million Americans - most of them women - have been diagnosed with the controversial medical disorder fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS). Because of the absence of definitive physiological markers, a well-understood cause, or effective treatment, FMS is controversial. Many have questioned if FMS is a real illness or if women sufferers are modern-day hysterics. Amidst the controversy, millions of women live with their very real symptoms. Rather than taking sides in the heated FMS debate, Kristin Barker explains how FMS represents an awkward union between the practices of modern medicine and the complexity of women's pain. Using interviews with sufferers, Barker focuses on how the idea of FMS gives meaning and order to women beset by troubling symptoms, self-doubt, and public skepticism.

"The Fibromyalgia Story authoritatively explores the roles doctors and patients played in 'discovering' fibromyalgia; explains why, overwhelmingly, fibromyalgia affects white working-class women; and analyzes why doctors have ignored this basic demographic fact. Written with an amazingly evenhanded approach, it is an important contribution to scholarship on medicalization; illness experience; identity construction; and the intersections of race, class, and gender."-Rose Weitz, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, Arizona State University, and author of Life With AIDS and Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us About Women's Lives "Barker tells a story of the interface between the biomedical community and the fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) community. In giving voice to women who are suffering from FMS, she shows how the facts of how women live their lives are often obscured by physicians and researchers in a drive to adapt FMS to a biomedical model where it clearly does not fit well. This failing has led to the development and perpetuation of an institutionalized FMS community of sufferers, with both positive and negative consequences. Ultimately, Barker provides insight into the failings of biomedicine thus far to improve FMS-related quality of life that should guide researchers towards integrating social and cultural factors into the study of FMS physiology."-Leslie J. Crofford, M.D., Gloria W. Singletary Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Chief, Division of Rheumatology, Director, Center for the Advancement of Women's Health, University of Kentucky "Kristin Barker presents us with one of those rare sociological studies of the experience of illness by examining how women manage a common but contested pain syndrome called fibromyalgia. Based on in-depth interviews with sufferers and an analysis of medical and non-medical literature, Barker increases our understanding of the gendered construction of the disorder and how sufferers manage their symptoms, seek legitimacy, and develop an illness identity in the context of a doubting medical world. This book should interest medical sociologists and practitioners as well as people with fibromyalgia and their families."-Peter Conrad, Harry Coplan Professor of Social Sciences, Brandeis UniversityFrom the PublisherThe first unbiased assessment of fibromyalgiaAbout the AuthorKristin K. Barker is Associate Professor of Sociology at Oregon State University.