

Girl, Interrupted: Two Perspectives

Allie Jones and Jenna Smith, PharmD Students¹
Carol Ott, PharmD, BCPP²

¹CPNP Purdue University Chapter

²Clinical Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice, Purdue University College of Pharmacy
Faculty Advisor, CPNP Purdue

KEYWORDS

film review

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:

Girl Interrupted, released in 1999, is a film portraying a young female in the 1960s struggling with the uncertainty of her own mental illness. With the persuasion of her parents, Susanna Kayson admits herself into a psychiatric institution and is later diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. From today's perspective, Susanna's illness may not have reached the severity requiring admission into an institution, but does provide a great picture of one's own battle with discovering the truth behind her condition. Her battle shows that those suffering from a psychiatric disorder may not always meet the stereotypical picture portrayed by the general public, specifically displayed when taxi driver taking her to the institution commented, "Well you don't look crazy." The other characters in this film did an excellent portrayal of symptoms of illnesses such as OCD, a severe eating disorder, grandiose delusions, sociopathic tendencies, and bipolar disorder, but the specific diagnoses remained unclear. The film showed the personal frustration and confusion involved in understanding one's disorder in a time when society lacked much insight into psychiatric disorders.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE:

Girl Interrupted is a film that portrays not only the struggle to understand her own mental illness in an adolescent girl, but also offers insight into the impact of others on our view of ourselves, as well as the impact of others on our behaviors and view of the world. Susanna Kayson does not understand the severity of her suicide attempt and initially attempts to "downplay" its impact, instead adopting some of the attitudes and behaviors of her friends on the inpatient unit until a traumatic experience causes her to call into question what she had done and believed in the past. The film is an accurate portrayal on long-term hospitalization in the 1960s, a patient in her condition today would likely be admitted for an acute, short-term hospitalization with subsequent

outpatient treatment. It is a good film for students to view in order to further understand the underlying challenges in the treatment of an adolescent patient who is trying to gain insight into their mental illness, while also facing the challenge of growing up.

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