Pharmaceutical entanglements: an analysis of the multiple determinants of ADHD medication effects in a Chilean school.

Rojas Navarro S, Vrecko S.


Abstract

This article draws upon findings from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Chilean school to explore how the effects of globally circulating ADHD medications emerge within the localized contexts of everyday users. An analysis of observations of children on ADHD medications within classroom settings is developed which challenges the assumption, pervasive within biomedical paradigms, that the effects of such medications can be understood as resulting directly from their chemical properties and biological modes of action. Our case study highlights the significance of multiple, interacting determinants of drug effects in an everyday setting, focusing in particular on classroom dynamics, teacher-student relations, and the agency of children taking the medications. We conclude that while ADHD medications may act in part by altering physiological processes, an adequate account of their effects requires that analytic attention extends to the sociomaterial contexts in which medications and users are embedded.