
FOLK MEDICINE AND DISABILITY

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Original article

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DISABILITY AND FOLK MEDICINE: THEORIES, FIELD RESEARCH, AND CULTURAL VARIABILITY

In this introductory article the author, the head of two research groups for Disability Research analyzes causes of low interest in studying this phenomenon (or even its absence) among Russian ethnographers and anthropologists. She briefly describes the emergence and history of Disability Studies, models and approaches existing within this interdisciplinary field, issues and topics that are being considered by ethnographers and anthropologists in many countries. The author also highlights the common ground between Disability Studies and medical anthropology, with scholars, specializing in Disability Studies, focusing on the social and cultural aspects of disability as a complex phenomenon rather than the medical problems of disabled people. According to the author, the causes of the low interest in Disability Studies among Russian anthropologists root in the profound stigmatization of disability and in medical approach to this phenomenon, which is widespread not only in the Russian mass consciousness, but also among academic community. The paper also discusses the establishment of research groups for Disability Studies in two Russian academic institutes, their main activities and publications. Concluding the article, the author presents papers that comprise a special section of the journal Vestnik Antropologii (Herald of Anthropology). These papers consider some folk medicine practices for treating serious illnesses and traumas that lead to disability as well as perceptions of impairments in different culture, such as the peasant culture of the Russian North, traditional and modern Abkhaz and Circassian cultures.

Keywords: *anthropology, ethnography, disability, disabled people, stigmatization, social constructivism, medicalization*

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