How Japanese nurses learned injustice from patients’ illness narratives
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I have been teaching a course called “Ningengaku or Anthropology/Human relations” for graduate students of nursing school in Japan for over ten years. The main objective of this course is to understand patients’ suffering from multifaceted perspectives by way of reading and discussing illness narratives of patients. One of the illness narratives as a required text is Keiko Yanagisawa’s Mitomeraren yamai, or Illness not Permitted, which is a novel based on her own experience. Dr. Yanagisawa used to be an active embryologist and is one of the female pioneers of this field. However, she has suffered from an unknown disease since early in her career and was forced to relinquish her role as a scientist due to it.

Through reading and discussing this textbook, graduate students become mindful of some issues: how medical professionals suffer their patients despite of their professional roles; how a female patient holding a job has much more difficulty to keep her social status than a male patient in Japan. In this paper, I will present an illness narrative from a Japanese novel that would be a good educational resource for nursing students to recognize issues of social injustice between female and male patients.