Epistemic Authority in an Age of Self-Diagnosis

In an era of unprecedented accessibility of knowledge, how do we define expertise? In the philosophical discourse on epistemology in psychiatry, significant attention has been given to epistemic injustice, with consideration for the value of patients' lived experience against the psychiatrist's clinical authority. In this presentation, I argue that a shift in epistemic authority is emerging, with patients increasingly presenting with a self-diagnosis.

Access to social media and artificial intelligence is changing why people seek psychiatrists. What was previously expressed as "I have trouble concentrating" has increasingly become "I have ADHD."

How do we address these external sources of knowledge that patients bring to the clinical encounter? In discussing both pitfalls and benefits of this epistemic shift, I propose *epistemic alliance* as a discrete and necessary component of the therapeutic alliance. Epistemic alliance attends to the patient's sources of knowledge, exploring the meaning and motivation behind seeking specific diagnoses. It does not call for accepting or refuting self-diagnoses, but treats them as hermeneutic information, helping clarify what the patient is seeking. This process avoid flattening clinical authority while engaging the patient's epistemic contributions for a deeper understanding of the patient.