

Cancer Myths in Terms of Media

After watching “Pieces of April” during the annual movie night hosted by the CRC, I noticed many things about the way in which the director went about portraying cancer vs. my personal experience in regards to cancer. In particular, there was a scene in the movie where April, the main character in the movie was sitting around the dinner table with her mother, who was suffering from breast cancer and the rest of her family. As her mother was discussing her breast cancer symptoms and the doctor’s diagnosis, there was much tension between the family members. April and her father started yelling at each other over an argument over how the mother should go about treatment. Although this caused a feeling of intensity felt by the audience, I feel like that particular scene wasn’t an accurate depiction of the feelings that cancer portrays. Ultimately, I feel like sometimes directors try to falsely depict emotions in order to simply please the audience, but if the scene were to take place in real life the same emotions wouldn’t necessarily be depicted. I do agree that cancer does stir many emotions and especially causes strain on family member; however, the extent to which this is depicted changes in movies vs. in real life. In the movie there was a lot of tension and frustration, as there was much less sense of support shown. I think directors do this to gain the attention of the audience because when people come to see movies, they expect suspense and what better way to create suspense then to cause a stir of emotions in the movie? It is interesting because in my personal experience, when I was first diagnosed, when we had family discussions about the surgery or when I first told my friends, everyone was shocked, yes but everyone was also very calm and supporting. Especially in family discussions, there wasn’t any yelling or anyone getting frustrated. It was a tense time but in order to keep me calm, my family had to remain calm. When choosing what scenes to incorporate into the film, I think directors tend to pick ones that will appeal more to the audience which are the more emotional scenes, which they also feel will help the audience understand the message of the movie better. I understand a director’s perspective in this circumstance, but I think doing this creates a false expectation or a stereotype amongst the audience of what the influence of cancer actually consists of. Thus, when people watch these kinds of scenes, like the ones in “Pieces of April” they get used to seeing the more emotional side of cancer, so naturally when they think of cancer they think of the emotional aspect. This false interpretation of cancer affects how people view cancer because rather than viewing it as simply another disease, they instantly think of it as a deadly disease. I guess maybe that’s why my parents were so concerned about me telling people about my personal experience because as soon as I said the word “cancer” people got so concerned and would start asking questions. They show worry rather than acting more like a supportive figure. So in essence, another reason why I chose not to share parts of my personal story was because of the false expectations that revolved around cancer.

This product was based off of a co-curricular activity where I assisted the CRC in their annual movie night and for which I also made a “Pieces of April” flyer to help advertise the event