

**ROMANTICIZING ILLNESS: REPRESENTATION OF LOVE AND
DISEASE IN *MIDNIGHT SUN* (2018) AND *MEET ME AFTER SUNSET* (2018)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor
Degree in English Department



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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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MOTTO

"So, surely, with hardship comes ease. Surely with hardship comes more ease."

Q.S Al-Inshirah (94:5-6)



DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, who always support me, with prayers and financial support, and who will wait for me until I finish my final paper.

For myself, who always tries to do my best. Even though I have gone through ups and downs, they are all valuable lessons.

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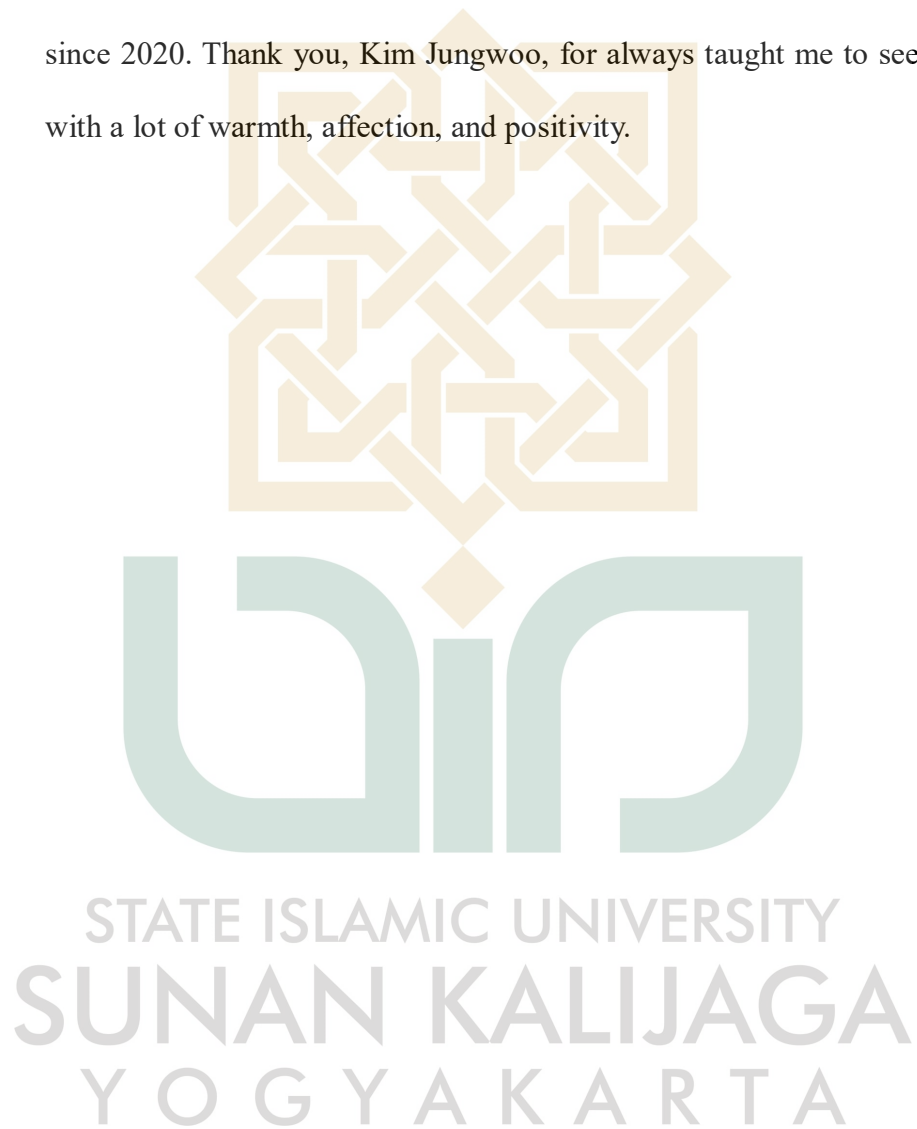


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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out how love and disease are represented as discourse in *Midnight Sun* (2018) and *Meet Me After Sunset* (2018) films. The main object of comparison is the character Katie from *Midnight Sun* and Gadis in *Meet Me After Sunset*. How the discourse of disease and love is constructed simultaneously in the stories of Katie and Gadis' characters with different social and cultural backgrounds is crucial to probe because discourses convey and create power and hierarchy. This study compares two characters with the rare disease of *Xeroderma Pigmentosum* that makes them sensitive to sunlight, and they are experiencing the teenage phase of falling in love. This study employs comparative methods which are very important in how different socio-cultures can influence the discourse on love and illness. Discourses and constructs regarding love and illness in popular literature cannot be fully understood without referring to gender and socio-culture. Illness is romanticized in *Meet Me After Sunset* and *Midnight Sun*. In the Indonesian context, the discourse of love as freedom is less obvious. In contrast, the discourse of isolation and the lack of agency are more pronounced compared to the American counterpart because of the differences in cultural patterns that operate in both films. The discourse of illness in both stories leads to a binary gender hierarchy that associates masculinity with health, while femininity is associated with illness. The isolation caused by disease can also be associated with domestic femininity, which then becomes the idealized value of femininity in both films.

Keywords: Love, Disease, Film, Isolation, Comparative Studies, Indonesia, America

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana cinta dan penyakit direpresentasikan sebagai wacana dalam film *Midnight Sun* (2018) dan *Meet Me After Sunset* (2018). Objek perbandingan utama adalah Katie dari film *Midnight Sun* dan Gadis dari *Meet Me After Sunset*. Bagaimana wacana penyakit dan cinta dikonstruksi secara bersamaan dalam cerita dua tokoh dengan latar belakang sosial dan budaya berbeda sangat penting untuk ditelaah karena wacana menyampaikan dan menciptakan kekuasaan dan hierarki. Penelitian ini membandingkan dua karakter dengan penyakit langka *Xeroderma Pigmentosum* yang membuat mereka sensitif terhadap sinar matahari, dan mereka sedang mengalami fase jatuh cinta remaja. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode komparatif yang sangat penting dalam melihat bagaimana perbedaan sosio-kultural dapat mempengaruhi wacana cinta dan penyakit. Wacana dan konstruksi mengenai cinta dan penyakit dalam sastra populer tidak dapat dipahami sepenuhnya tanpa mengacu pada gender dan sosial budaya. Penyakit diromantisasi dalam *Meet Me After Sunset* dan *Midnight Sun*. Dalam konteks Indonesia, wacana cinta sebagai kebebasan kurang begitu kentara. Sebaliknya, wacana isolasi dan kurangnya agensi lebih menonjol dibandingkan dengan film Amerika karena perbedaan pola budaya yang terjadi di kedua film tersebut. Wacana penyakit dalam kedua cerita tersebut mengarah pada hierarki gender biner yang mengasosiasikan maskulinitas dengan kesehatan, sedangkan feminitas dikaitkan dengan penyakit. Keterasingan akibat penyakit juga bisa dikaitkan dengan feminitas dalam rumah tangga, yang kemudian menjadi nilai feminitas yang diidealkan dalam kedua film tersebut.

Keywords: Cinta, Penyakit, Film, Isolasi, Studi Komparatif, Indonesia, Amerika

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Midnight Sun (Scott Speer, 2018), an American film, and *Meet Me After Sunset* (Danial Rifki, 2018), an Indonesian film, are two movies with the theme of love and disease. These films portray the romance of teens who fall in love while suffering from a serious disease. In particular, these films highlight the journey of love that grows and flourishes despite the main character's difficulties and obstacles with a serious disease. Love and disease are often perceived as two opposing entities. Love is often associated with happy and affectionate moments felt by a partner, best friend, or family. Disease is often associated with sadness and emotional burden.

Both love and disease have a significant impact on human life. In the context of this study, two female characters facing rare diseases are examined, and how these health conditions are associated with the dynamics of love relationships presented in both films. In fiction, love can also essentially be viewed as a metaphorical disease. According to the philosophers, love is a disease that has to be treated (Ruth Rothaus Caston, 2006, p. 292). Thus, love and disease discourses share the same focus--the body--and even a common vocabulary (Susann Cokal, 1999, p. 167). As a result, the conflation of discourses of love and disease is critical to probe as well as interesting, although it is not easy to see how the disease could have been romanticized at all (Latimer, 1990, p. 1016).

Fictional representations of disease and love have been found in old Greek poetry (Shmidt, 2018, p. 14). Literature provides a symbolic environment in which illness and health, concepts of being sick or feeling well, suffering, and healing intentions are all represented and connected to other cultural concepts (Kottow & Kottow, 2007, p. 4). Love as an illness had a well-established medical history by the sixteenth century in Western Europe, both as a phenomenon described in literature and as a reality experienced by many patients (Allison Brigid Collins, 2020, p. 5). The complexity of the relationship between love and disease in the fictional realm continues to be discussed for its significance. Disease not only symbolizes the character's health but also ethos, identity, and the reader's interest in the disease narrative (Bey, 2017, p. 6). The way the lover is portrayed, how love is compared to a disease, and how much focus is placed on finding a treatment (Ruth Rothaus Caston, 2006, p. 272). Disease is likely to result in death (a type of ending) or even a cure (which is still a type of change, an ending, a new beginning, a sort of conversion) (Sharon Magnarelli, 1986, p. 204).

Gadis in *Meet Me After Sunset* (2018) and Katie in *Midnight Sun* (2018), suffer from the rare disease *Xeroderma Pigmentosum* (XP), it is particularly sensitive to sunlight. XP is characterized by a high level of sensitivity to sunlight, which causes sunburn, pigment changes in the skin, and a significantly increased incidence of skin cancer (Alan R Lehmann, 2011, p. 1). Moritz Kohn Kaposi, a Hungarian dermatology professor, originally diagnosed XP in 1874 when he reported two patients with thin, dry skin, skin contraction, checkered pigmentation, cutaneous blood vessel dilating, and the early onset of certain cutaneous tumours (Leung, Barankin, Lam, Leong, &

Hon, 2022, p. 2). Patients with XP have unusually elevated and prolonged erythematous responses, higher rates of skin cancer, and are lacking in the specific types of DNA repair that are most effective in inducing erythema in normal subjects (Rees, 2004, p. 741). An outstanding characteristic of XP is the high rate of carcinogenesis (Cleaver, 1969, p. 434).

Gadis and Katie only left the house at night and isolated themselves during the day. Isolating themselves leads to social isolation. Social isolation is a well-known social factor of health, and its negative consequences have been widely documented for decades (Kadotani, Okajima, Yang, & Lim, 2022, p. 1). Adults' health is recognized to be harmed by social isolation (Lacey, Kumari, & Bartley, 2014, p. 87). Social isolation and loneliness indicate social separation (Cené et al., 2022, p. 2). Loneliness is defined as the gap between a person's desired and actual quality and quantity of social relationships. In contrast, social isolation is defined as a lack of contact within a social network or group (Elovainio et al., 2023, p. 109). Loneliness, or the subjective sensation of social isolation, is a common experience that can become a persistent element of daily life (Danvers et al., 2023, p. 1).

Katie and Gadis receive parental figures from their father, as their mother died when they were young. Although only cared for by one parent figure, the father's role is not considered insignificant. The father is frequently the head of the household, having major decision-making power and influence over family dynamics (Italo Lopez Garcia, Lia C.H. Fernald, Frances E. Aboud, Ronald Otieno, Edith Alu, 2022, p. 1). Fathers are firmly associated with the act of providing economically for their family

members, emotionally stoic and authoritarian, or what is referred to in the literature as the traditional paradigm of fatherhood (Macht, 2020, p. 5). Fathers have been more involved in child-rearing activities due to recent socio-cultural developments, giving their children more time, care, and emotional support (Spurr et al., 2023, p. 2). Parents of children with critical illness have strong individual beliefs about what provides excellent parenting (Hill et al., 2019, p. 190). Communication is one of the most important aspects of a daughter-father relationship, which also affects the relationship's quality (Jilani, Akhtar, Faize, & Khan, 2022, p. 147).

Katie and Gadis initially tried to avoid men who were attracted to them. They initially tried to avoid it since they believed the disease, they were suffering from was a disgrace. The interpersonal relationships of females are always impacted by their psychological well-being, experience, learning from fathers, and confidence (Zia & Masoom Ali, 2014, p. 62). The inclination of an individual to feel afraid when they believe they are missing information at any level of awareness or processing (Carleton, 2016, p. 5). Health anxiety refers to the fear and worry that come as a result of living with a chronic condition (Lebel et al., 2020, p. 2).

XP became an obstacle not only in their lives but also in their love story. In addition, the love and disease constructed in such a way need to be discussed. The social relationship between the sick and the healthy becomes unique. Sick people communicate their disease to others, and the recipients respond in a variety of ways (Dantzer, 2021, p. 1). Secure social relationships and love are essential for overall health and illness prevention (Carter & Dantzer, 2022, p. 2).

This situation is not just a disease that causes physical suffering but also mental isolation, making sufferers have a double burden and complexity in their psychological responses. Social isolation and disconnection can increase the risk of mental health problems such as sadness and anxiety (Santini et al., 2020, p. 63). There is a clear link between chronic stress and health outcomes, such as biomarkers of disease, early disease states, and, in some circumstances, mortality (Epel et al., 2018, p. 154). Suffering has a negative effect on a person's mental health (Stilwell, Hudon, Meldrum, Pagé, & Wideman, 2022, p. 733). Suffering can be defined as the unwanted experience of significant intensity or length of a bad physical or affective condition (VanderWeele, 2019, p. 58). Physical suffering frequently includes feelings of pain, and psychological suffering may include feelings of despair, anxiety, or wrath (VanderWeele, 2019, p. 58).

Interactions with others are an important component of what makes humans human (Litt, Zhao, Kraut, & Burke, 2020, p. 1). Social interactions are more than just enjoyable social behaviors; they can influence key life outcomes such as how quickly people heal and how long they live (Litt et al., 2020). According to a prior study, minimum social interactions promote subjective well-being, and this impact is mediated by an increased sense of belonging (Ishiguro, 2023, p. 2). Certain connections between health and social competition have been proposed to be mediated, with two major costs of living in groups being the increased social transmission of parasites and the greater vulnerability to disease and infection caused by chronic stress brought on by social competition (Kappeler, Cremer, & Nunn, 2015, p. 1). Since chronic illness

can have a long-lasting negative impact on a person's mental health, enhancing psychosocial well-being has been the main goal of many interventions (Merolli, Gray, & Martin-Sanchez, 2013, p. 964).

This study aims to investigate the discussion into a single study that focuses on comparing two elements into two different objects of study. George Paizis' model from the book "Love and the Novel" (Paizis, 1998) is the analytical lens to probe the selected romantic fiction. The theory outlines how the steps while falling in love occur. So, this study uses the theory of types of love based on this perspective. Kravitz (Kravitz, 2010) provides a fundamental basis for analyzing the illness represented in both films.

Apart from the universal construction and complexity of the discourse on love and illness in these two films, socio-cultural differences will also increasingly color this discourse. This study argues that: 1. Comparative methods are very important in how different socio-cultures can influence the discourse on love and illness. 2. Discourses and constructs regarding love and illness in popular literature, in this case films, cannot be fully understood without referring to gender and socio-culture. In what follows, the study will elicit how the construction of love and disease manifest into discourses, which show how gender dynamics play a critical part. Those are love as freedom, disease as isolation, and disease as incompleteness of agency. From those three discourses, gender dynamics will be read.

1.2. Research Questions

How the discourse of XP disease and love are constructed in the stories of the two characters with different social and cultural backgrounds?

1.3. Objective of Study

This research has the objective of finding out how the discourses of XP disease and love are constructed in *Midnight Sun* and *Meet Me After Sunset*. This is against the backdrop of two characters with different social and cultural backgrounds. This research using a comparative method by referring the research on discourse theory based on George Paizis's book and representation of illness based on Bennet Kravitz's book.

1.4. Significance of Study

This study employs comparative methods which are very important in how different socio-cultures can influence the discourse on love and illness. Second, discourses and constructs regarding love and disease in popular literature, in this case films, cannot be fully understood without referring to gender and socio-culture.

1.5. Literature Review

There are several previous discussions of *Midnight Sun*: (Wahyu, Haniyah, Teacher, & Education, 2021) analyzed the same object but with different theories. The research focuses on analyzing XP disease, and explaining the illustration of how XP disease is depicted and shown in the film *Midnight Sun*. (Herliana & Suhendi, 2021) the research investigates the personal motivation of the main character in the movie *Midnight Sun*. (Putri, 2020) determines the types of conversational implicature and

maxims, and (Aprilia, Kamma, Natsir, & Lubis, 2023) describes the personality of Katie's character in the *Midnight Sun* story using Sigmund Freud's theory.

1.6. Theoretical Approach

1.6.1 Representation Theory

Representation has a crucial role in producing and exchanging knowledge within a society. It involves the use of words, signs, and visuals that stand for or represent something (Hall, 1997, p. 15). In the study of culture, the concept of representation makes the connection between culture and meaning (Hall, 1997, p. 15). Representation not only show how culture is conveyed but also constructed in a literary work. In this study, representation relates to the construction of love and disease from different cultural backgrounds. In this context, consider how the illness is represented in literary works, specifically films. The idea of incorporating disease into literature has been around for a long time, ever since fiction writing began (Kravitz, 2010, p. 1). Representations of illness have captured the imagination of countless readers (Kravitz, 2010, p. 1). Bennet Kravitz is the author of the book "Representation of Illness in Literature and Film," which investigates how illness is depicted in various narratives and the cultural and emotional consequences of these representations. This book investigates the relationship between literature, film, and illness while also providing an overview of society's attitudes regarding disease. The book contributes significantly to the subject of disease in literature and film. By analyzing these narratives, supports authors to comprehend how disease are represented in cultural contexts in the films *Midnight Sun* and *Meet Me After Sunset*. This book will be used in this study to explain

how disease images are constructed socially, affected by cultural narratives and society attitudes about health. This demonstrates how illness can reflect or challenge existing stereotypes. In contrast George Paizis' model from the book "Love and the Novel" is an analytical lens to investigate the selected romantic fiction. This theory outlines how the stages of falling in love occur. Thus, this study utilizes the theory of types of love based on this perspective. These two positions are summarized and compared: passion-love and married love (Paizis, 1998, p. 109). The implications of the debate on the two types of love raised in the first meeting can be given a much wider projection, far beyond the boundaries of fiction, although literature remains one of its protagonists (Paizis, 1998, p. 116).

1.6.2 Film Theory

After in-depth analysis, each element of the movie gives its meaning. Film components include cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, editing, sound, and narration. In *mise-en-scène*, through her book, Villarejo said that *mise-en-scène* consists of 6 important components: setting, costume, lighting, hair (styling), makeup, and character behaviour (Villarejo, 2006, p. 29). Single element of *mise-en-scène* is also an element of cinematography, as a camera record everything that is "put in" to a given image (Villarejo, 2006, p. 36).

Another important component as described by Villarejo, (Villarejo, 2006, p. 38) is the anthropocentric taxonomy to describe distance, which uses the human body as a reference point for each designation:

1. The extreme long shot (ELS): The human figure is barely distinguishable;

2. The long shot (LS): Humans are distinguished but still dwarfed by the backdrop;
3. The medium long shot (MLS): Where the humans are framed from the knees up;
4. The medium shot (MS): where framing humans from the waist up;
5. The medium close-up (MCU) where it is slightly closer and see the human from the chest up;
6. The close-up (CU): which isolates a part of a human being (the face, which is most prominent);
7. The extreme close-up (ECU), where only parts of the face (eyes, lips) are seen.

1.7 Method

1.7.1 Type of Research

This study employs a comparative point of view. Comparative literature studies how various literary works in different languages converge, as well as the numerous examples of these links' connections in the past and present, and the effects of these historical connections and their manifestation (Salahuddin Mohd. Shamsuddin, 2022, p. 1). Comparative literature studies the connection between literature and other disciplines, such as history, politics, art, and science (Sharma, 2021, p. 376). "Comparative cultural studies" is conceived as a method with three theoretical subject areas: 1) To study literature (text and/or literary system) concerning culture and the field of cultural studies.; 2) To study literature in cultural studies using aspects (theories and methods) drawn from comparative literature; and 3) To study culture and its

composite elements and aspects in the proposed "comparative cultural studies" approach rather than the currently dominant single language approach that deals with a topic in terms of its nature and problematics in only one culture (Tötösy De Zepetnek, 2003, p. 1).

The purpose of this study is to answer how the discourse of XP disease and love are constructed in the stories of the two characters with different social and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative study can be defined as "the study of the nature of phenomena", that is, "their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived", but does not include "their range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect" (Busetto, Wick, & Gumbinger, 2020, p. 1).

1.7.2 Data Sources

There are two types of data sources used in this study, primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of actions and dialog that both characters (1 from each film) experience. The actions and dialog are in the form of interactions between lover, fathers, or even with the social. Secondary data is collected from journals, articles, and books that support the analysis of primary data.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

First, the researcher watched the entire movie *Midnight Sun* and *Meet Me After Sunset* to understand in detail how the construction of the discourse of love and disease is represented. Second, the researcher used some other supporting data, namely theories

from George Paizis' book "Love and the Novel" and Bennet Kravitz's book entitled "Representation of Illness in Literature and Film" as well as scientific articles in journals.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The researcher determined the variables; passion-love and married-love based on George Paizis' theory and disease representation from Bennet Kravitz's theory representation of illness in literature to identify the data. The researcher identified the discourse of love through the stages of love that occur in both films. The first meeting between the two protagonists represents the first type of love, 'destiny, recognition, sympathy' (Paizis, 1998, p. 111). Then the second type is married love, 'choice, knowledge, esteem'. The concept of representation is also applied in this research. The use of two elements aims to see how very opposite things in this case love and disease are constructed by comparing two films that have different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the researcher connects the variables with the data taken from the characters. From the movies, there are two characters consisting of two teenage women, Katie from the movie *Midnight Sun* (2018) and Gadis from the movie *Meet Me After Sunset* (2018). Lastly, the researcher used secondary data to support the analysis and conclude it as a whole as a result of the research.

1.8 Paper Organization/Presentation

There are four chapters in this research. The first chapter is the introduction and preface, which includes research background, research questions, objectives, significance, literature review, theoretical approach, research methods, and paper

organization. The second chapter describes the intrinsic elements or literary aspects of the two films, namely *Midnight Sun* and *Meet Me After Sunset*. The third chapter explains the results of analyzing the data that has been collected. The last chapter, Chapter Four, concludes the research or provides suggestions for further research and subsequent researchers.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Illness is romanticized in *Meet Me After Sunset* and *Midnight Sun*. In the Indonesian context, the discourse of love as freedom is less obvious. In contrast, the discourse of isolation and the lack of agency are more pronounced compared to the American counterpart because of the differences in cultural patterns that operate in both films. The construct of love is very dominant in both stories. However, the construct of disease or illness leads to a more crucial discourse. The discourse of illness in both stories leads to a binary gender hierarchy that associates masculinity with health, while femininity is associated with illness. The isolation caused by disease can also be associated with domestic femininity, which then becomes the idealized value of femininity in both films. The efforts made by male characters to make female characters more autonomous actually seem to make the gender hierarchy more amplified. It reminds us of Jules Michelet's expression that 'to be a woman is to be ill.

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4.2 Suggestion

Based on the analysis and conclusions above, the researcher would like to make the following suggestions:

1. Research about diseases from other cultures needs to be developed for cultural understanding. Diverse cultures have different beliefs that related to disease, which can influence the perception, treatment, and management of disease.

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