Trauma, Medicine, and Improvisational Religion
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ABSTRACT

Based on ethnographic immersion in pediatric medical contexts, this paper makes some observations about the difference between pain and suffering, ideas of human agency, and the place of religion in parents’ efforts to make sense of their child’s illness. I draw on ideas by William F. May, Margaret Urban Walker, and Jonathan Z. Smith to re-frame how medical responsibility, moral agency, and religion shape the life-worlds of patients and families in acute and primary healthcare settings.