

Melancholia: A movie review

Reinaldo Basanez, PharmD, Candidate 2012
Josh Caballero, PharmD, BCPP, Assistant Professor

Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy

Melancholia, a drama written and directed by Lars von Trier, starring Kirsten Dunst, Charolette Gainsbourg, and Keifer Sutherland, is a film that embraces depression and the environmental stressors that contribute to it. The two main protagonists, Justine and Claire, highlight two different manifestations of depression. The film is divided into two parts. The first part of the film introduces the characters and focuses on Justine's wedding and her personality. She is a young woman experiencing feelings of unhappiness, loneliness, and sadness. Justine tries to drown her depression behind an outrageously expensive wedding. Although she attempts to suppress her emotions, it just isn't enough. Her depressive feelings begin to overwhelm her, leading to an unsuccessful wedding day.

The second part of the film presents Justine in a severe state of depression; however, the focus of the story now turns to Claire, Justine's sister. In a turn of events, Melancholia becomes the name of a planet hiding behind the Sun. Scientists believed Melancholia would hit the Earth during its course and destroy the human race. Here is where the movie transcends itself. Melancholia is linked to both of the characters' lives, in the sense that both of them see the apocalypse and the inevitable completely differently. From Claire's perspective, the news about Melancholia's course serves as a constant reminder how death will approach her and her family, causing her to feel both anxious and depressed. On the contrary, for Justine, this had been the moment she was waiting for...the moment she would be vindicated from her depression. She feels she will finally be able to connect with the planet she is living in; something she was unable to accomplish before learning of this event.

From an outside perspective, this movie depicts how depression can present differently and provides the viewer with a closer look at this mental illness. For Claire, the fact that death was approaching awakened a sense of anxiety and feelings of futility. For Justine, death was the only way she would be cured of her emptiness, and she calmly welcomed the end of humanity. This movie reminds us that death will take each one of us at some point in our lives. While most of us do not want to know the time of our death, some of us will undoubtedly know

(e.g., terminal cancer). Some will welcome it with open arms, while others will shudder at its touch. How would you react if you knew the date and time of your death?

How to cite this news article

Basanez R, Caballero J. Melancholia: A movie review. Ment Health Clin [Internet]. 2011;1(6):145. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9740/mhc.n89415>