

Table 10.2 Summary of sociological perspectives: Health and medicine

	Functional	Conflict/Feminist	Interactionist
Explanation of the social problems of health and medicine	<p>Although illness may threaten the social order, it does have a legitimate place in society.</p> <p>This perspective also addresses the functions and dysfunctions of the medical industry.</p>	<p>Patterns of health and illness reflect systematic inequalities based on ethnicity/race or gender, and on differences in power, values, and interests.</p> <p>Conflict theorists examine the power of the medical industry and its consequences.</p> <p>Feminist theorists examine medicine's control of women, specifically of normal female experiences linked with the female reproductive system.</p>	<p>This perspective acknowledges how illness is created and sustained according to a set of shared social beliefs or definitions.</p> <p>Theorists in this perspective address how social, political, and cultural meanings affect our definition and response to health and illness.</p>
Questions asked about health and medicine	<p>What is the role of illness in our society?</p> <p>What functions and dysfunctions does the medical industry provide?</p>	<p>How does the medical industry exert control over its patients?</p> <p>Is everyone treated fairly and equally by the medical system?</p>	<p>Who or what defines what it means to be "sick" in our society?</p> <p>How do our definitions of disease and illness shape our beliefs and behaviors?</p>