

Medicine on the big and small screen: **One Day, One Room**

Therese Jones, PhD, and Les Friedman, PhD,
Movie Review Editors

House episode (season 3, episode 12) **One Day, One Room**

Cast Members: Hugh Laurie, Jennifer Morrison, Omar
Epps, Robert Sean Leonard, Lisa Edelstein, Jesse Spencer

Starring (Episode Special Appearances): Katheryn Winnick,
Geoffrey Lewis

Episode Director: Juan José Campanella. Originally Aired:
January 30, 2007. Running Time: 44 minutes. Streaming
Available on Amazon

Reviewed by Michael R. Blackie, PhD

The success of the television drama, *House MD*, largely lies in the surly and outlandish antics of its titular character, the Vicodin-addicted physician, Gregory House. The show, ran for eight seasons, and still maintains a faithful fan base despite going off the air six years ago.

House's behavior, an acerbic combination of diagnostic acumen and arrogance, thrills audiences because he acts in ways we all wish we could.^{1,2} He embodies a maverick force who gives the finger to hospital bureaucracies, gleefully violates the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and nearly always saves his patients from certain death.

The show's structure follows a predictable pattern: a patient presents with a rare disease or a baffling set of symptoms that other physicians find impossible to diagnose. House's ability to solve the diagnostic riddle, seems to justify his bad behavior and absent bedside manner. Viewers can be certain of how each episode will end; what surprises them and keeps them coming back for more is never knowing what outlandish things House will do along the way.

One episode denies viewers these reassuring pleasures. "One Room, One Day" features Eve, a young woman who has been raped, and despite House's stated disinterest in her case because he doesn't find it scientifically challenging, insists that he be her doctor.

Stuck doing clinic duty, House meets Eve, who, along with a parade of other patients, believes she may have a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Of all the patients he sees that day, only Eve tests positive. When House tells her the results—she has chlamydia—Eve becomes emotional. As he hands her a prescription, she knocks it away, yelling,

"Don't touch me." House, understanding immediately what has happened to Eve, says, "Oh, God."

It is this scene of recognition that ties Eve to House. Asked why she wants him to be her doctor, she explains, "It's like you hurt, too."

The episode then turns away from its winning formula, becoming a study of House encouraging a patient to tell her story, in order to begin healing. Given that House prefers consulting test results over listening to patients—who he believes always lie—this task proves particularly challenging given that Eve wants House to disclose the source of his suffering before she will discuss the night she was raped. House, who never refutes her belief that he suffers from some hurt, eventually recounts a history of child abuse by his father, to which she replies, "I'd like to tell you what happened to me now." Although the veracity of House's disclosure is questionable, the value of sharing stories is not.

The episode's title, references an observation Eve makes during an earlier conversation with House, who has told Eve she is pregnant as a result of the rape, and assumes she will want to terminate. She, at first, refuses this option, declaring a belief in the sacredness of life. Most of the remainder of the scene matches House's cool logic with Eve's religious convictions, until, in frustration, he asks why she insists on arguing a point neither one will agree on. "Because," she says, "life is a series of rooms and who we get stuck in those rooms with adds up to what our lives are."

Eve's philosophy, like the episode's departure from its formulaic structure, asks us to remember the essential place of storytelling in our relationships with others.

References

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2. Jeschonek R. Be Like House. Editor: L Wilson. *House Unauthorized*. Dallas. Bendella Book: 2007; 97–108.

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