

REVIEW OF *THE NEUROSCIENTIST WHO LOST HER MIND*

This recounts a period of Lipska's life in which brain tumors, caused by melanoma, caused her to behave erratically. In the beginning she says that one of her takeaways from this experience is greater empathy for those with mental illness. Her story is a reminder of how much our very personalities can be shaped—and deformed—by forces we cannot see or control. Some of Lipska's symptoms were:

- fixating on negative things (after a two-hour train delay, she ruined the weekend with her family by continually ranting about how “Amtrack sucks”)
- memory loss and paranoia (she didn't recognize her family's long-time pest control service and accused its representative of trying to poison them with chemicals)
- disorientation and difficulty navigating
- poor prioritization (during a physical therapy appointment to deal with a serious issue with her arm, she became angry that the solution was too much of a hassle and too silly-looking, so she stormed off in anger)
- inability to recognize that any of these symptoms indicated something was wrong with her

There's an interesting anecdote from before any of these behavior changes. Lipska was excited to be accepted into a clinical trial to try to treat her tumors. To be eligible, she could not have any active tumors in her brain, so a scan was done to check that no new tumors had developed since she had undergone radiation therapy. Her doctor confirmed that the scan showed no new tumors. However, she had also sent her scans to another doctor for a second opinion, and this one found new tumors the day before she was scheduled to start the trial. This put her in a difficult position: should she tell this to the people conducting the trial, likely disqualifying herself and eliminating her best hope at survival? Or conceal it, and risk the dangerous effects of undergoing the trial while having active tumors? (Ultimately she decides to keep it a secret and do the trial.)

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