

Institute of the History of Medicine and Medical Ethics

Chair of the History of Medicine

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Research Focus

- History of Scientific Collection
- The social history of the hospital and the sanatorium

Structure of the Institution

The Institute of the History of Medicine and Medical Ethics consists of a Chair for the History of Medicine and a Professorship for Medical Ethics. The institute also houses the "Forum for Medicine and Human Rights," established in 2006 and the office of the Clinical Ethics Committee. In addition it is charged with the care for the Medical Collection in the city of Erlangen. Fourteen associates are in the institute's employ. Research is conducted by 12 scholars, seven of which are part-time. Currently 18 dissertations on the history and ethics of medicine are being supervised under the auspices of the institute. Six scientific book series are overseen by members of the institute.

The Chair of the History of Medicine researches questions associated with ancient medicine and its reception in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (R. Wittern-Sterzel), the social history of medicine in early modernity with a focus on the history of anatomy and surgery, as well as patient history (M. M. Ruisinger). Further research examines networks of medical correspondence (also the subject matter of several dissertations) as well as the pre-history and early history of the health and hospital systems (F. Dross). Finally, projects on the history of medicine and health in the region (homeopathy in Franconia by M. M. Ruisinger and F. Dross) and in particular on the history of the medical faculty of the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg are also underway.

A larger joint project combining history and ethics, commissioned by the governing body of the university and the medical faculty, researched and documented, e.g., the issue of doctor's titles being revoked during the "Third Reich" (R. Wittern-Sterzel, A. Frewer).

The Professorship for Medical Ethics is particularly active in the areas of clinical ethics and ethics counseling. It also has a research focus in medicine and human rights. The research program "clinical ethics" deals with the basic moral questions surrounding proper care for patients, with the justification of actions undertaken by physicians in everyday medicine, and with conflict situations in the hospital and private practice. Core questions concern clinical problem cases from the beginning of life (prenatal diagnostics, pregnancy conflicts, neonatology, etc.) ethical questions in crisis situations (oncology, genetic counseling, psychiatry, transplantation) to controversies about the end of life (euthanasia, care for the dying). Important instruments of clinical ethics are argumentation analyses of the counseling given by committees in applied medical and bioethics as well as empirical research studies.

The research area "medicine and human rights" deals with the various levels and aspects of human rights questions in the fields of medicine and biological sciences. This research focus is the only one of its kind in German medical faculties; its institutional anchor is the "Forum for Medicine and Human Rights."

Research

History of Scientific Collection

Project manager: U. Andraschke, M. M. Ruisinger

Collecting, ordering, and systematizing the world of objects has numbered among the central practices in the production of knowledge since the Renaissance. Collections were assembled at universities and were a core element of research and instruction in many disciplines. The history of these collections therefore reflects the history of academic disciplines in terms of their founding and their internal differentiation. The collections that still exist today are an important resource for inquiries into the history of science and the universities. They also offer the possibility of communicating research findings to a larger public in an appealing and immediately comprehensible manner. One result of the research project, sponsored

by the Staedtler-foundation and the commission of universities, and accomplished in part with the aid of the study group of university collections in Erlangen's Metropolitan Museum, was the special exhibition "Unpacked. The Collections of the Erlangen-Nürnberg University," along with the publication "U. Andraschke, M. M. Ruisinger (eds.): Die Sammlungen der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. Nürnberg 2007."

The social history of the hospital and the sanatorium

Project manager: F. Dross

Ever since the leprosaria of the High Middle Ages, specialized care and isolation facilities have existed in Europe. Since the beginning of the modern period, intensive scrutiny has been paid to the close connection between poverty and illness. At the beginning, for instance in the case of sanatoria for plague victims, the concern was to isolate the ill, but by 1800 the notion had arisen that the hospital could become a publicly funded facility for the care of the indigent that could prevent poverty by curing illness. Nevertheless, quick and efficient medical treatment in the specialized surroundings known as the "hospital" was only available after the revolution of modern surgery in the late 19th century. The concept of the modern hospital is thus far older than the medicine that could breathe life into the concept. The research project investigates the social, political and regulatory debates, as well as the medical debates in history since the Late Middle Ages. At the point where these debates converged there emerged a specialized sanatorium for the prevention of poverty by means of medical services as a hospital *avant la lettre*. (The Invention of a Medical Institution? The Discussion on Hospitals Around 1800. In: M. Dinges (ed.), *Health and Health Care between Self-Help, Intermediary Organizations and Formal Poor Relief (1500-2005)*, Lisbon 2007, S. 133-144).

Teaching

The Institute of the History of Medicine and Medical Ethics is responsible for instruction in medical terminology, as well as the history, theory and ethics of medicine. In the HTE seminars students learn the foundations of medical history, the theory of medicine and medical ethics by examining specific topics such as the history of the plague, the concept of health or

questions of medical ethics. Teaching methods include the interpretation of texts, cases discussion, roll-playing, short presentations, multimedia presentations and class excursions.

The topical seminar "medicine and aging" is the institutes' contribution to the module "dealing with age in the past and present." Moreover, the institute is responsible for the area of ethics as a part of the introduction to clinical medicine. As an elective, the course "skills in ethical communication," is offered as a subdivision of the modules "breaking bad news," "speaking about death and dying," and "intercultural communication." Innovative techniques in instruction are utilized such as working with simulated patients.

As a part of the major in molecular medicine students also study the subject "history of science and ethics." In cooperation with the philosophy faculty courses are offered to deepen the students' knowledge in the subjects of medical and bioethics.

Beyond this, a survey lecture course is offered on questions of the history and ethics of medicine and six series of scientific books are edited by members of the institute.

Selected Publications

Ruisinger MM (2007) Surgery in letters. The example of Lorenz Heister's epistolary consultation. *Med Gesch*, 29: 131-42, 266

Dross F (2008) "Battlefield of love": the Fronberg-Hospital of the Deaconry Motherhouse Kaiserswerth. *Medizinhist J*, 43: 149-82

International Cooperation

Prof. Dr. Laurinda Abreu, PhoenixTN European Thematic Network on Health and Social Welfare Policy, Universidade de Évora, Portugal

Deutsch-Polnische Gesellschaft fuer Geschichte der Medizin e.V., TU Dresden, Germany/Poland

Meetings and International Training Courses

11.-13.07.2008: Medizintechnik – Sammeln, Forschen, Ausstellen: Symposium Medizinhistorische Museologie, Erlangen



*Wittern, R./Frewer, A. (2008):
Erlanger Forschungen, Sonderreihe Band 12.
Verlag: Universitätsbund Erlangen-Nürnberg e. V.*