

Call for Papers

Medicalisation of Spaces, Spaces of Medicalisation: New Debates in the History of Medicine and Science

University of Kent, Canterbury

12th November 2005

300 Word Abstracts for Papers due on the 1st August 2005

This conference aims to address spaces of medicine and science: geographic, physical, imagined or other. Much scholarship has been devoted to how medical and scientific practices were carried out in the past, but seldom is the significance of the actual places where these practices occurred considered.



We know little about how the structures were expected to be arranged to facilitate a specific working environment and, indeed, how the working environment influenced medical or scientific practice. There have, nonetheless, always been specific structures, places within structures or geographical locations that were selected as most suitable for particular applications, conducting experiments or practicing medicine, for example. The chosen area for these spaces was most likely originally organised in accordance with local traditions. Though why is it important to know how these areas were arranged? Spaces can be both physical and imagined, and yet significant to the understanding of the history of medicine and science through time. For example, the physical environment of a hospital could dictate the level/type of care provided, equally the setting itself could influence the actual practice of medicine. Moreover, by following how the chosen setting adapts and develops, something of the social, cultural and philosophical influence upon medicine and science can be discerned. Thus, there are context-specific relationships between built spaces and scientific practices, and those spaces are central in the reproduction of particular skills and bodies of knowledge and the type of knowledge, which emerged. Each medical/scientific philosophy will be a determining factor in, and be determined by, the spatial arrangement. Since there are different philosophical ideas in science and medicine, and equally within the fields within them, it is interesting to consider how these might have influenced the arrangement of spaces and conversely how spaces influenced philosophies of medicine and science. By understanding how different societies in the past visualised their spatial arrangements we can learn something about how they thought and how social and symbolic relations were maintained. Fortunately, information about spatial organisations can be found in the literary, pictorial and archaeological record.

Papers addressing the use and significance of space can be considered to learn more about perceptions of medicine and science in the past. We invite papers focusing on 'spaces' in the history of medicine and science to facilitate an interdisciplinary discussion between scholars in diverse fields and we warmly welcome abstracts from postgraduates and scholars working in areas such as Anthropology, Archaeology, History and Sociology, although this is by no means exclusive. By remaining intentionally broad, we aim to facilitate discussions to consider the role, influence and importance of the physical, geographic and bodily settings in which medicine and science has been conducted.

Please contact Dr. Patty Baker (P.A.Baker-3@kent.ac.uk) and Tal Bolton (tb40@kent.ac.uk) for further information. Abstracts should either be sent to Patty Baker at the School of European Culture and Languages, Cornwallis NW, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NF or Tal Bolton at the School of History, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NX. Picture The Leiden Anatomy Theatre, W. Swanenburgh after Jan Cornelisz wan't Woudt, 1610.(The Wellcome Institute Library, London. L9967)