

Standard drugs and drug standards

A comparative historical study of pharmaceuticals in the 20th century

Call for Papers

ESF Research Networking Program DRUGS

Workshop June 16-18, 2009

Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, Spain

Org.:

Ana Romero (ana.romero@cchs.csic.es)

María Jesús Santesmases (mariaj.santesmases@cchs.csic.es)

Circulation of Antibiotics: Journeys of Drug Standards, 1930-1970

Antibiotics have been celebrated everywhere since they were widely distributed at the end of WWII and onwards. The production in different national settings of the first drug available in this group, penicillin, successful clinical trials with it in the treatment of infections and the popular reception it met with, became public and medical knowledge. As agents of a medical revolution which shifted borders between health and disease and created new spaces for therapy, the life-saving capacity of antibiotics was one of the most popular “scientific” successes in 20th century history.

This workshop will focus on current research into the histories of antibiotics from the perspective of the circulation of standards, in particular, studies that connected practices in different social and cultural domains, and how those standards spread. Clinicians, researchers, patients and health authorities shaped antibiotics cultures. Even if the concept of “revolution” is currently under debate, these new drugs and their effects moved social and professional knowledge, norms and standards. From one place to another, networks of users and consumers rearranged their practices.

The aim in suggesting the notion of circulation is to draw attention to the issue of the journeys those standards made. We would like to explore how antibiotics’ standards travelled and how national norms, clinical protocols, research and professional practices, as well as public knowledge, influenced each other and eventually shaped public health and epidemiology. This means that there were trajectories, physical trajectories. Batches of antibiotics travelled; protocols and instructions of use and production were distributed and received in particular local settings, promoted by national authorities. Bacterial resistance to antibiotics contributed to shape research and medical practice and played a part in increasing knowledge about the mechanisms of the action of antibiotics at cellular level and as well forming the basis upon which further search for new antibiotics developed. Penicillin was the first of a long series of antibiotic drugs: streptomycin’s successful effect in the treatment of tuberculosis followed, as did chloramphenicol and tetracyclines. Figures of treatment results, of cure and resistances, travelled as well.

This workshop is a collaborative project of the Working Group on Antibiotics of the European Network DRUGS, funded by the European Science Foundation. This group includes researchers from the universities of Manchester, Oslo, and Amsterdam, CERMES (Paris) and the Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (Madrid).

Proposals for papers should be sent to Dr Ana Romero (ana.romero@cchs.csic.es) or Dr María Jesús Santesmases (mariaj.santesmases@cchs.csic.es) by 1 March 2009. Abstracts should not exceed **350 words**.

<http://www.drughistory.eu>