



Gestures, Practices, Memories: Thirty Years of Medical Humanities

On 18 March 1992, a compulsory humanities and social sciences module was introduced in the French medical curriculum, by decree. Usually taught by professionals from the fields of philosophy, sociology, history, anthropology or geography, the humanities, and social sciences, have since then accompanied students and nurses on their way towards becoming health professionals. Initially limited to the earlier years of the medical curriculum, recent reforms (the reform of the clinical training, the so-called "R2C", in particular) have reaffirmed the importance of human and social sciences in medical students' training.

For 30 years now, the human and social sciences of health - or medical humanities - have thus enabled future health professionals to approach both their training and their career differently. Essentially, they are brought to move beyond a merely biomedical model of illness, care and medical practices by emphasising how those practices are embedded in ethical, historical, philosophical, political and social contexts. This approach contributes to the development of critical thinking and reflexivity that enable future health professionals to question their knowledge and practices.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the significance of the human and social sciences. They have for example helped better understand social dynamics of "vaccine hesitation".

In times of crisis, when bodies, gestures and care practices are at stake, researchers in the medical humanities prove to be indispensable analysts, interpreters and translators of the world in motion, where the natural and biomedical sciences fail to shed light on the social.

By reactivating these critical questions, we seek to inscribe them in the long term, by taking example of past crises. Rarely has there been such sharp interest of health professionals, but also of the civil society in the history of epidemics and in how a society should manage an epidemic of such unknown and uncertain contours.

This anniversary of medical humanities is also an opportunity to reinvestigate the question of temporalities, while putting to the test the construction of this critical spirit that they have promoted for thirty years. What place should be given to memory of epidemics and past health crises? How, beyond the immediacy of a crisis, can memory impact on the gestures and practices of health? How can we take memory into account and use it as a support which helps future health professionals to find their place?

The 9th College of Medical Humanities (ColHum) conference will seek to address the following themes (although not exclusively):

- **Experiences:** the impact of crisis on healthcare actions and practices should be studied and understood, both at the time of the crisis and after its resolution, over different time frames and types of experiences.
- **Materials of illness, care and caregivers:** Moments of crisis are also situations of material disruption, which encourages us to think about the medical humanities through the prism of instruments, objects and medical heritage.
- **Memories and forgetfulness:** Experienced differently by society's actors, moments of crisis are an interesting laboratory for grasping the coexistence of different and complementary temporalities, for questioning the different forms of memory (patients and caregivers, memory of polluted environments, antibiotic resistance, etc.)
- **Teaching the medical humanities:** Finally, these moments of crisis challenge established models of teaching on both a didactical and a methodological level. We aim at reflecting more broadly on medical humanities' teaching, by presenting projects and experiences.

Practical information

1. Calendar

- Submission of proposals: ~~31 March 2022~~ extended to 15 April 2022
- Notification of acceptance: 30 April 2022
- Opening of registration: 30 April 2022
- Closing of registration: 1 June 2022
- ColHum Congress: 9-11 June 2022

2. Venue

→ Le Cardo building, Sciences Po Strasbourg

The building is located on the campus of the Faculty of Medicine, Maieutic and Health Sciences, at the Hôpital Civil.

3. Application procedure

Proposals for papers are due by ~~31 March 2022~~ 15 April 2022 (extension).

The form is available on the congress website, under the "Submit" tab. It will invite you to fill in your first and last name, your affiliation, the title of your paper and a short abstract (250 words max.) as well as a short biography (50-100 words) in the "comment" space.

→ Congress website address: <https://colhum2022.sciencesconf.org>

Contributions from all disciplines are welcome and early career researchers are particularly encouraged to apply.

Papers in French and in English are welcome.

4. Registration fees

- 50€: registration without special arrangements
- 10€ students (externals to the University of Strasbourg)
- 0€ students from the University of Strasbourg and job seekers

For an exceptional fee waiver, please contact the congress organising team.

The online registration and payment module will be open from 30/04/2022 to 01/06/2022.

The registration gives access to the coffee breaks, the lunch and the festive evening on 9 June.

ColHum members will also be invited to pay their annual membership fee of €20 ahead of the conference using the HelloAsso website: <https://bit.ly/3JxHMQV>

Please note that although membership is not obligatory for the conference, we do encourage new memberships to support our activities.

Organising team and contact

If you have any questions, please send an email to colhum2022@sciencesconf.org. The organising team consists of Déborah Dubald, Nils Kessel, Solène Lellinger, Paul-Arthur Tortosa, and Martin Vailly.

- Déborah Dubald is a Teaching and research fellow at the Faculty of Medicine, Maieutic and Health Sciences in Strasbourg. She teaches medical humanities in the Bachelor program “Sciences pour la santé (L1/L2 SPS), in second-year medical studies, in the history of science and technology at Sciences Po Strasbourg, as well as at the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Life Sciences. She holds a PhD in History and Civilisation from the European University Institute of Florence (2019), and her research focuses on the material cultures of the natural and sciences. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2128-0641>
- Nils Kessel is Ass. Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Strasbourg. A historian by training, he teaches human and social sciences in health and the history of science and technology at Sciences Po Strasbourg. He is responsible for the "Health, environment, politics" Master program (year 1) in political science which is open to health students (Sciences Po Strasbourg and Faculty of Medicine). His research focuses on medicine as a social object, with a specialisation in risk management, consumption and medicine markets.
- Solène Lellinger is Ass. Professor at the Faculty of Health of the Université Paris Cité and vice-president of Colhum since March 2021. She is involved in the coordination and teaching of human and social sciences in medicine at different levels of training (from PASS/LAS to externship). She also teaches sociology and history of health in the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) master's program at the University of Paris, where she is co-director of the professional course in master 2. Her research mainly concerns the socio-history of therapeutic agents and their interaction with the actors of the health system. <http://solenelellinger.wordpress.com>
- Paul-Arthur Tortosa is a former student of ENS Cachan and holds a doctorate in history from the European University Institute in Florence (2021). His thesis focused on the fight against epidemics in Italy under French rule (1796-1805), at the crossroads of the social

history of health and the sociology of science. He is currently a Postgraduate teaching and research fellow at the University of Strasbourg and his research focuses on two areas. On the one hand, from a history of knowledge perspective, he studies the scientific, political, and economic stakes of the debates on diseases of uncertain or unknown etiology. On the other hand, from a sociology of public problems perspective, he is interested in the dynamics of invisibilities of public health problems. He teaches at the University of Strasbourg and at Sciences Po Strasbourg on the themes of the doctor/patient relationship, One Health and the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Martin Vailly is a historian of science and knowledge and a Teaching and research fellow at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Strasbourg, where he teaches medical humanities. He holds a PhD from the European University Institute of Florence, and his thesis was centred around geographical cultures at the court of Louis XIV, based on a case study of Coronelli's the large terrestrial globe and its reception among French geography enthusiasts. He has specialised in the teaching of Science and Technology in Society (STS) and is currently working on the relationships between humans and their living environments, through the prism of modern cartography. <https://cv.archives-ouvertes.fr/martin-vailly>

Further information

- Department and organizing laboratory: [Department of History of Life and Health Sciences](#) and [SAGE Laboratory \(UMR 7363\)](#)
- College of Medical Humanities: [COLHUM](#)