EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION
SETTING SCIENCE AGENDAS FOR EUROPE

Standard drugs and drug standards

A comparative historical study of pharmaceuticals in the 20th century

Call for Papers

New Deadline for Abstracts: 8 May 2009

Drugs, Standards, and Chronic Illness

Workshop
To be held at the
Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine
University of Manchester
27-28 November 2009

Non-communicable illnesses such as cancer or heart disease have long been feared. Having previously been conceived of as 'diseases of civilization' or 'degenerative diseases', in the twentieth century, when the threats posed especially by tuberculosis declined in the industrialised world, these illnesses turned into major issues for policy makers and public health experts, pharmaceutical companies and an anxious public. Cancer and cardiovascular disease and the role that the development and marketing of treatments for chronic illness have played in the broader history of standardization in medicine will be the central theme of this workshop.

The histories of cancer, cardiovascular disease and other non-communicable illnesses have much in common, but there are important differences between them that are worth exploring. Many of the blockbuster drugs of the last 50 years have been developed for the treatment of cardiovascular disorders. In the course of this development, some illnesses have been transformed from acute to chronic (e.g. malignant hypertension) and it has become acceptable to treat physiological parameters that do not cause symptoms but are statistically associated with illness later in life (e.g. mild hypertension or hypercholesterolaemia). In contrast, and with few exceptions, cancer drugs have often been used to treat what might otherwise be considered as orphan diseases and have rarely been as commercially profitable as cardiovascular drugs. Nevertheless, cancer has been central to the development of many of the practices, such as testing, clinical research, and standardization, which are increasingly applied to other fields of medicine, above all the multi-centre randomised clinical trial.

We are especially interested in contributions that are in themselves comparative or invite comparisons, between different illnesses (for example heart disease and cancer) or across different national contexts.

Papers may discuss issues surrounding notions of the chronic and the acute or the relationship between risk and disease. Or they may look at spaces of drug administration: from inpatient to outpatient departments. Institutional developments will also have to be discussed. Another issue worth exploring is the concept of 'chemotherapy'. What did it mean in different contexts? Regulatory institutions, policies and practices also lend themselves to international comparisons. Such practices were closely related to the clinical specialties dealing with the different diseases, inviting comparisons between them. Further points for discussion will be issues related to the consumption of medicines, the role of patients and patient organizations, and questions of gender. All these can be viewed as leading to the establishment of standards that were different between countries and diseases, in a process that can be studied historically and geographically.

We plan to organise the workshop around the following main analytical points:
- The management of risk and efficacy
- The structure of biomedical research: laboratories, clinics, protocols
- Market conceptualisation, market realities, sales and uses
- Regulatory frameworks and regulatory practices

Please send abstracts (no more than 500 words) to
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Dr Viviane Quirke: vquirke@brookes.ac.uk

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The workshop forms part of the Research Networking Programme **Standard Drugs and Drug Standards** of the European Science Foundation. For more information please visit http://drughistory.eu/