

Call for abstracts for a conference on

Medicine and Time

8th – 9th of June 2020 at the Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg in Greifswald,
Germany

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Conference topics

It is known since antiquity that medicine and time are inextricably related to each other in manifold ways. The first Hippocratic Aphorism points exactly to this relatedness: “Life is short, the art far, the favorable moment fleeting, the attempt deceptive, the decision difficult.” It confirms the time gap between lifetime (short) and time of the medical art (long). It addresses medical decision-making by acknowledging that the time for successful medical intervention can quickly pass (fleeting). Moreover, the aphorism testifies that in medicine this constellation has a long tradition of being grappled with.

Given the current exponential growth in medical knowledge and acceleration in many areas of modern societies, these temporal relationships are not likely to have lost their relevance. On the contrary, the time gap is likely to continue to widen – and thus the challenges time poses to medicine increase. Current medicine is undoubtedly part of a rapid process of acceleration, actively and passively: medicine participates in it and contributes significantly to this. After all, medicine belongs to one of the main factor of acceleration, to the sciences.

However, in opposition to the general trend, many elements in medicine are resistant to acceleration and hardly change if at all. For instance, one ought to consider the basic medical situation of the patient in need of the physician’s help, certain ethical principles, the character desired of a physician, the structure of decision-making, and certain basic rules of medical strategy. The same applies to certain biological processes on which medical practice is based: Any attempts to accelerate pregnancies have proven to be unsuccessful. In this respect, it must be assumed that the temporal relationships within medicine have changed and that rapid developments are juxtaposed with stable, acceleration-resistant elements. Areas with a different temporality collide in contemporary medicine.

This constellation leads to several questions, which deserve to be addressed in the conference “Medicine and Time”:

- Which ethical challenges arise from the acceleration of the production of scientific knowledge in medicine?

- What happens when natural-time programmed machines or systems operating with Artificial Intelligence encounter people with a different temporality?
- What makes the difference between the subjective experience of time and objectively measured natural time evident in the accelerating practice of medicine to patients, physicians, researchers? What does the collision of areas with a different temporality in current medicine mean for the life of a patient, a physician or a researcher?
- How should medicine and its participants react to it?
- In how far can we foresee (and proactively deal with) the future of medicine which will most probably be characterized by further acceleration in some areas of medicine?
- In how far does medicine reflect its own temporal situatedness and the current developments?

These are some of the questions the conference will address. Abstracts that focus on other issues related to medicine and time are welcome.

Organizational issues

The conference will be held on the 8th and 9th of June 2020 at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Greifswald, Germany. Beginning on Monday, June 8th, a public evening lecture is given for the same day. The conference will continue till June 9th in the afternoon.

Conference language is English.

For those applicants who are accepted travel expenses and accommodations will be covered.

Please send your application (abstract of 350 words and brief CV) to Urban Wiesing <urban.wiesing@uni-tuebingen.de>

Abstract submission deadline: November 1st, 2019

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