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D E U T S C H -
P O L N I S C H E
G E S E L L S C H A F T
F Ü R G E S C H I C H T E
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XX Biannual Conference of the German-Polish Society for the History of Medicine

Date and venue: **4-5 September 2025**, Schloß Mickeln (Alt-Himmelgeist 25, 40589, Düsseldorf) Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Germany

Call for abstracts

European dissertation cultures in medicine

At the core of our twentieth conference is the doctoral dissertation within the medical terrain. The Latin word *dissertatio* means *argument* or *detailed discussion*, making this classic form of scholarly publishing an ideal subject for longitudinal historical analysis. It allows the comparative study of academic discourse.

Originally, the dissertation was a document intended to supplement and prepare a doctoral candidate for the key moment of the doctoral project, the oral examination (*disputatio*). During the 19th century, however, the emphasis on the dissertation and the oral exam was reversed in several European countries with importance increasingly placed on the written work over its verbal counterpart. Dissertation policies in Europe varied then as they do now, depending on university traditions and legal frameworks.

Medical dissertations have a rich history. It is clear that both theory and practice are essential components of a well-rounded medical education. Yet, for centuries there have been debates in medicine about this relationship, particularly in the context of university training. There is a long tradition of questioning the practical relevance of medical degree programs and the scientific requirements of dissertations.

From early on, a doctorate promised better career opportunities and a higher income for physicians. At the same time, scholars would talk about “diploma mills”, suggesting that the requirements to earn the title are low at some universities. For example, the European Research Council (ERC) still does not recognize the German medical doctorate as proof of independent research. More broadly, the relevance of dissertations remains under dispute with uncertainties regarding plagiarism, authorship, and good scientific practice in times of advanced technology and artificial intelligence surfacing today.

Our aim with this conference is to examine doctoral theses in a medical-historical context, from their production (when, where, why, by whom, how...) to their reception in Poland, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. When and how did medical faculties begin to develop their own dissertation culture, and how do medical dissertations differ from those of other faculties? Together, we aim to raise and discuss several questions of this kind as they relate to expertise, authorship and impact in medicine.

The organizers look forward to receiving abstracts about research related to dissertations, e.g.: careers in medicine; (in-)equality; authorship; plagiarism/scientific fraud; networks; digitization projects; policies, practices and rituals; trending topics over time; science language shifts; university history; scientific styles; gender; social/scientific impact of dissertations; politics and the public image of dissertations.

We encourage the submission of abstracts that build connections between the history of medicine and related disciplines.

Keynote lecture

Stefan Hartmann & Adrian Loerbroks, Düsseldorf: Dissertation acknowledgments

Abstract deadline: January 15, 2025. Please send max 300 words and a max. 100-word biography to hansson@hhu.de.

There are no conference fees. Participants are expected to pay for travel and accommodation themselves. Junior researchers and other researchers may apply for subsidies to cover travel costs.

Looking forward to seeing you in Düsseldorf in September 2025!

Scientific committee representing the board of the German-Polish Society for the History of Medicine

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Fritz Dross (Erlangen)

Joanna Nieznanowska (Szczecin)

Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska (Poznań)

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