

The Birth of the Clinic: Hospitals and the Institutionalisation of Health Care in Central and Eastern Europe, 1784–1914

Conference organised by the German Historical Institute Warsaw and the Institute of Czech History, Faculty of Arts at the Charles University, 22–24 June 2023, Prague, Czech Republic.

Since the late 18th century, medieval and early modern hospitals that provided asylum for the handicapped, the insane, the aged or the homeless gradually disappeared. Hospitals as segregation and confinement tools for leprosy and plague were being transformed into Leiden-type clinics. Along with the transformation, human life started to be medicalized, and health care institutionalized. The population's health became an object of official and scholarly scrutiny. State authorities introduced health and medical supervision of a broad societal strata. They determined pathological, dangerous, or unacceptable behaviour and defined their appropriate treatments, which were promoted. The state's drive to maximize people's productivity and well-being brought with it discipline and moralizing. In the state and the individual's interest it was decided to return the sick into the economic and labour process. Doctors and health professionals were beginning to speak out against the "superstitious" rural culture. Diseases and infections changed into a political issue and the human body into a politicized object. Health care moved from patients' homes to hospitals, which it was hoped would contribute to ensuring prosperity and multiplying national wealth.

While this general idea may be correct in many respects, it should be added that it did not materialize as a one-off event but has continued for more than a century and a half. Moreover, it was not the only possible way and did not always and everywhere take hold. It coexisted with other types of health care, whether home and community-based or natural and folk healing. Thus, the goal of the conference is not only to discuss the rise of clinics and to analyse the extent to which clinics contributed to changes to medical care in the largest town and university cities, but it also attempts to examine various models and patterns of hospitals and health care that appeared in different places in Central and Eastern Europe over the course of the 19th century.

According to Michel de Certeau, medical strategies were manifested in specific places (e.g., the doctor's office or the hospital), but treatment concepts and tactics were enacted in an unbounded space. Thus, the conference aims to deal with the history of hospitals and health care institutions in a broader territorial and time scope. Did geography play a role in any differences that appear? The conference asks: How were hospitals structured? How did the layout of hospitals, places,

and spaces of health care look? Did they separate and segregate patients by illness, class, status, ethnicity, gender, age?

The conference also poses the questions: What types of hospitals existed and how did they change? Were they linked to state, public, or private funding, or did they combine them all in some way? Did healthcare draw from a model of industrial production and corporate management, as has been stated many times? How were hospitals and non-institutional health related? Did they generate conflicts, parallels, or peaceful cohabitation?

Papers exploring healthcare institutions and focusing on the (micro)history of church, municipal and district hospitals or private maternity hospitals and institutions for the mentally ill in the long-term perspective are encouraged.

Please send your abstract of no more than 350 words and a short biographical note by 30 April 2023 to both Zdeněk Nebřenský (nebrensky@dhi-prag.cz) and Daniela Tinková (daniela.tinkova@ff.cuni.cz).

The conference will take place 22–24 June 2023, in Prague, Czech Republic. In the case of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, the conference will be held in a hybrid or online format. Conference languages are English, German, Czech and Polish. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the organizers.