

# *Tracing Never-ending Diseases*

*New Trends in Medical, Material, and Audiovisual History*

**Summer School**

**5-9 June 2023**

**Brocher Foundation, Switzerland**

**Deadline for application: 15 January 2023**

## **General Description**

The *Tracing Never-ending Diseases: New Trends in Medical, Material, and Audiovisual History* Summer School aims to probe the history of public health methodologies and materialities in education and medical research to trace, test, inventory, and treat infectious diseases between the end of the 19th century up until the present day, in which we focus on the body and micro-organisms with questions such as (but not limited to),

a) What objects and artefacts did doctors and researchers mobilize at different moments in time to give a visible and tangible reality to diseases whose clinical presentation was complex, multifaceted, and sometimes partially unexplained?

Through what screening, classification, and collection processes did a set of symptoms and epidemiological observations take on clinical or epidemiological meaning?

b) What relevant methods and approaches allow historians to create meaning from vestiges of diseases of the past? What scientific problems (i.e., ethical, legal, scientific) does the reuse of previous medical samples raise today?

We will be studying cases of landmark diseases that—as is the case of syphilis or tuberculosis—are resistant to prevention campaigns or that—as is the case of HIV/AIDs—thwart international eradication programs. In order to present the newest and most useful historiographic approaches in the field, we will bring material culture, audiovisual studies, and the history of medicine into conversation. We will construct our reflection using the history of objects as a foundation, such as public health films, medical tests, anatomical castings, photographic collections, public health propaganda posters, and biological archives.

The Summer School will be a 5-day working conference structured around intensive discussion and hands-on research activities. It will bring together experts from academia, the cultural heritage sector, and medicine, to mine the rich vein of overlapping studies between the History of Science, Medicine and Technology, Material Culture Studies, and Audiovisual History. It aims to educate a new generation of scholars in the History of Medicine, with a particular focus on materiality, the audiovisual, and interdisciplinary dialogue.

The Summer School's schedule will alternate between seminar sessions and participants' presentations. In each seminar, an invited expert will present their methodological approach in relation to a bibliography of resources; they will then propose small group exercises for participants. The goal is to reflect on the many innovative approaches developed throughout the history of medicine. Participant presentations will be the opportunity for participants to present, discuss and debate a case or hypothesis in dialogue with their personal research.

The week's activities will be further deepened by plenary sessions. A half-day will be dedicated to a visit and presentation from Geneva's History of Science Museum. And another will be spent welcoming Geneva's University Hospitals' clinicians within the framework of the infectious diseases continuing education program.

## Educational Value

Throughout the week, participants:

- will gain familiarity with approaches to material and audiovisual history as applied to medical and health issues encountered throughout the 20th century.
- will be introduced to approaches that combine cutting-edge technology and historical construction such as archeogenetics.
- will develop reflections on the traces left by diseases of the past, as well as on previous medical knowledge, thinking specifically of diseases that tended to spread invisibly—in order to escape epidemiological vigilance? How do objects used in medical education—testing techniques, prophylactic tools—provide visibility to these diseases or imbue them with clinical meaning?
- will receive personalized feedback on their research. They will have the opportunity to briefly present some of their own research interests that tie in with the Summer School's themes and methodological approaches. They will be asked to bring a few questions or research hypotheses to discuss with senior research professors and the group as a whole.
- will be encouraged to highlight the relevance of a historical study in the contemporary scientific and media landscape and to reflect on public health projects or on past medical developments as keys to understanding the present. In this capacity, they will be called upon to discuss with clinicians during an accredited half-day of continuing education for the hospital's infectious disease specialists.

## To participate in the Summer School

The School is open to 20 participants and will be held in English. It is designed for PhD and post-doctoral students in Contemporary History, Medical and Scientific History, Medical Anthropology, Film Studies, Material Studies, as well as young researchers interested in interdisciplinary studies between SHS (social and human sciences) and medicine. Participants will be selected through an application process.

Interested candidates are invited to apply by **15 January 2023** by sending **a CV and a motivation letter** in which you describe how you could contribute to the Summer School and what you hope to gain from attending it. Applicants will be notified by 1 February 2023.

The Summer School benefits from financial support from the SNF and the Brocher Foundation. A registration fee of **CHF 550.-** per participant is requested. This price includes both housing and meals.

Limited funding is available to cover or contribute to expenses in accordance to need. To apply for funding please send a list of estimated costs and an explanatory letter.

## Practical Information

The Summer School will take place in the exceptional setting of the Brocher Foundation, on the banks of Lake Geneva, Switzerland. It is organized as part of the international research project *Neverending Infectious Diseases: The Case of Syphilis*, funded by the Swiss National Funds for Scientific Research (SNF), in collaboration with the Brocher Foundation.

For further information on the research project: [neverending.unige.ch](http://neverending.unige.ch)

For further information on the location: [brocher.ch](http://brocher.ch).

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