

**Report on *Care and Cure: diseases, disabilities and therapies* Symposium, held at Swansea University, 14-15 June 2012**

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**Support granted from *Medium Aevum*: £663**

**Purpose for which this was used:** workshop costs/papers on Day 1 (including travel fees for workshop leader, Professor Julia Boffey; travel costs for Bianca Frohne, Theresa Tyers; Yvette Nuckel; one-night extra Bed and Breakfast for Bianca Frohne; Theresa Tyers; Yvette Nuckel).

**Aims** The conference examined themes in pre-modern healthcare and medicine (from c. 600-c.1800CE), with a particular emphasis on research methods and different disciplinary approaches to history of medicine. The central aim of the conference was to provide the opportunity for postgraduate and early career researchers to engage in workshops and discussions with leading experts on the ways in which disease, disability and medical care are represented in past texts and images.

**Participants/programme of research** The 35 participants (of whom 14 were postgraduates and a further 3 early-career researchers) were able to benefit from two workshops, three postgraduate papers, four other research papers and three plenary lectures. Programme at <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/riah/researchgroups/memo/care-and-cure-symposium-2012/careandcureprogramme/>

**Workshops** The *Medium Aevum* grant greatly increased our ability to hold methodological workshops for postgraduate students and early career researchers.

The first, **Using Images**, led by Drs Irina Metzler and David Turner (Swansea), considered the evidence of medieval and early modern pictorial representations of the sick and disabled. A striking feature of this was the continuity apparent in the metaphorical use of sickness and healthcare to engage in wider social or political comment (including everything from the portrayal of leprosy to Hogarth's *Polling Day*). The exhibition of the sick and disabled body in images was also apparent in one of the postgraduate papers (Nuckel), which considered the portraits of artisan inmates of the Twelve Brothers foundation in Nurnberg, each shown with their disability but also still engaging in their artisan trades. Whilst open to interpretation, such imagery is clearly not an unmediated source of evidence about the premodern sick and diseased.

The second workshop, **Miscellanies**, led by Professor Julia Boffey (QMUL) considered the use of miscellanies as evidence for medical knowledge and practice, and featured an in-depth consideration of a late-medieval English miscellany, NLW Brogyntyn MS ii.1. As in other texts of this type, consideration centred around questions of provenance, choices of texts and their likely readership. Medical receipts formed only part of this manuscript, and gave rise to questions about the context for practical medical care, use/availability of ingredients and the purpose of texts which seemed deliberately parodic. This chimed in with discussions of the ethics surrounding the preparation and distribution of simples and compounds and their use, echoed in a later postgraduate paper (Tyers).

The conference papers as a whole related individual case studies to wider issues of changes in research methods. There was a strongly reflective element to the two days: *how* we study premodern medicine is as important as *what* we study, and this requires the collaborative expertise not only of historians and those working in literary fields, but also of art historians, biologists, social scientists, archaeologists and clinicians.

**Outcomes** The discussions facilitated by this event will lead to follow-up sponsored sessions at major international conferences in 2013 such as the Leeds Medieval Congress and the

Association for Medical Humanities. Further exchanges are also planned between the medical history clusters at Swansea and Bremen universities. The conference succeeded in its aim of providing a high-quality environment for postgraduates to engage in discussion of the practice of History of Medicine. We are grateful to *Medium Aevum* for its support.