

# Practical Knowledge and Medical Practice in Ancient Mediterranean Cultures



**International Conference, 2–3 November 2015**

Collaborative Research Center (SFB 980) Episteme in Motion.  
Research Project A03: The Transfer of Medical Episteme in the  
'Encyclopaedic' Compilations of Late Antiquity



## Practical Knowledge and Medical Practice in Ancient Mediterranean Cultures

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To focus this meeting on the theme of Medical Practice will serve as a reminder that – whatever elaborate theories ancient experts might have held – this was not all that mattered in the day-to-day needs of their profession. Yet, the paucity of written evidence and archaeological remains frequently tell us more about the intellectual underpinnings of ancient medicine than about actual medical procedures. Since theory and practice were of equal importance in the constitution and transmission of medical knowledge, it is worthwhile to try and tease out whatever information is available about the reality of medical treatments. The conference presentations will address the different healing practices (diagnosis, bloodletting, surgery and other forms of treatment, including incantations) and the ways in which this practical medical knowledge was gained and transferred via experts, institutions and procedures. The multi-perspective comparative approach to Mesopotamian, Greek, Byzantine, Jewish-Talmudic, Chinese, Persian and Syriac medical traditions will help to sharpen the understanding of practical medicine in the Mediterranean across different periods and in varying socio-cultural contexts.

### Convened by

Philip van der Eijk (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  
Markham J. Geller (Freie Universität Berlin)

### Organised by

Christine F. Salazar (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  
Lennart Lehmhaus (Freie Universität Berlin)  
Franziska Desch (BerGSAS Berlin Graduate School of Ancient Studies,  
TOPOI Excellence Cluster Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

### On behalf of

Collaborative Research Center (SFB 980) Episteme in Motion  
Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
[www.sfb-episteme.de](http://www.sfb-episteme.de)



Image credit (title): Reduction of a dislocated mandible. Illustration in a 10th-century MS of Apollonius of Citium's Commentary on the Hippocratic *On Joints*, Biblioteca Medicea – Laurenziana, Florence. Wellcome Library, London (cropped).  
Image credit (above): 'Doctor's surgery'. Aryballos, ca. 470 BC, Musée du Louvre, Paris; Wikimedia commons (cropped).  
Image credit: Aeneas wounded. Fresco, 1st century AD, from the House of Sirico, Pompeii; Wikimedia commons (cropped).



**Sonderforschungsbereich 980**  
**EPISTEME IN**  
**BEWEGUNG**

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The Ao3 project “The Transfer of Medical Episteme in the ‘Encyclopaedic’ Compilations of Late Antiquity” is dedicated to the study of the epistemic productivity and creativity of the seemingly conserving and conservative genre of the encyclopaedia. The project examines the transfer and transformation of medical knowledge as it took place in the late antique Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud as well as in the late antique and early medieval medical compilations in Greek.

A list of publications, cooperations, and events organised by the project can be accessed on the SFB 980 website: [www.sfb-episteme.de/teilprojekte/sagen/Ao3](http://www.sfb-episteme.de/teilprojekte/sagen/Ao3)

## MONDAY, 2 NOVEMBER, 2015

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Institut für Klassische Philologie  
Marmorsaal, Room 2249a  
Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin-Mitte

Contact: Sekretariat Prof. Philip van der Eijk  
Dr. Friederike Herklotz and Katharina Bordiehn  
Room 3050, +49 (0)30.2093-70426

**9.30**  
**Registration**

### SESSION I, 10.00 – 12.00

**10.00**  
**Conference Opening**  
Welcome by **Philip van der Eijk**

**10.15**  
**Karl-Heinz Leven** (Erlangen)  
*„... auch die Ärzte konnten zunächst nicht helfen“ – Pest-Therapien in der Antike und in byzantinischer Zeit,*  
followed by discussion.  
Chair: **Christine Salazar** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  
(This lecture will also count as the Monday Colloquium for 2 November.)

Lunch break  
(A list of restaurants in the neighbourhood will be available.)

### SESSION II, 14.15 – 16.50

**14.15 – 15.25**  
**Matteo Martelli** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  
*Recipes and therapies ascribed to the prophet Esdras in the Byzantine and Syriac tradition.*  
Chair: **Francesca Corazza** (Excellence Cluster Topoi, Berlin)

Short break

**15.40 – 16.50**  
**Dan Levene** (Southampton)  
*Interdigitation of heterodox and orthodox in the living medical tradition of Ethiopia – stimulating thoughts about earlier Near Eastern magico-medical traditions.*  
Chair: **Lennart Lehmann** (Freie Universität Berlin)

Afternoon tea at Foyer Marmorsaal, then we walk over to the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften together (ca. 15 minutes’ walk).

### SESSION III, 18.00 – 19.30

Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften  
Einstein-Saal  
Jägerstraße 22-23, 5th floor, 10117 Berlin-Mitte

**Keynote lecture**  
**Ralph Jackson** (British Museum, London)  
*Medical Instruments in Late Antiquity: Continuity and Change.*  
Chair: **Roland Wittwer**  
(Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften)

## TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2015

Freie Universität Berlin  
TOPOI-Haus, Vortragssaal  
Hittorfstraße 18, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem

Contact: Sekretariat Prof. Markham J. Geller  
Sabine Büchner, Professur für Wissensgeschichte  
Room 108, +49 (0)30.838-58041

**from 9.15**  
Morning coffee at TOPOI Wintergarten

**9.45**  
**Welcome address on behalf of SFB 980**  
**Gyburg Uhlmann** (Freie Universität Berlin)

### SESSION I, 10.00 – 10.45

**Strahil V. Panayotov** (Freie Universität Berlin)  
*What do we know about Mesopotamian surgery – and what would we like to know?*  
Chair: **M. Ossendrijver** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Short break

### SESSION II, 11.15 – 12.15

**Keynote lecture**  
**Nils P. Heeßel** (Würzburg)  
*The domiciliary visit of the Babylonian healer – what do we actually know about the practical side of Babylonian diagnostics?*  
Chair: **J. Cale Johnson** (Freie Universität Berlin)

Lunch, served at TOPOI-House

### SESSION III, 13.45 – 15.00

**Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim** (London)  
*On the practice of bloodletting in the Hebrew medical work Sefer Asaf.*  
**Lennart Lehmann** (Berlin)  
*“Red for Red” – bloodletting between medicine and lifestyle in Talmudic sources.*  
Chair Session IV: **Almut Renger** (Freie Universität Berlin)

Coffee / tea

### SESSION IV, 15.30 – 17.00

**Shulamit Ch. Shinnar** (New York)  
*Rabbinic Techniques for Examining Parturient Tissue: Considering the Place of Graeco-Roman Medical Traditions within the Rabbinic Textual Corpus.*  
Chair: **Ulrike Steinert** (Freie Universität Berlin)  
**Stefanie M. Rudolf** (Freie Universität Berlin)  
*The Syriac Medicine man – medical science according to Bar Bahlul.*  
Chair: **Lucia Raggetti** (Freie Universität Berlin)

**Concluding remarks by Markham J. Geller**

High tea / refreshments

### SESSION V, 18.15 – 19.45

TOPOI-Haus, Vortragssaal

**Keynote lecture**  
**Paul U. Unschuld** (Charité Berlin)  
*What Is (Chinese) Medicine?*  
Chair: **Gerd Grafshoff** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

## WEDNESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2015

**Workshop, 9.30 – 14.30**  
Freie Universität Berlin, TOPOI-Haus, Kaminzimmer, Hittorfstraße 18, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem  
*‘Practical Medicine in Jewish Scriptures and Adjacent Traditions’*  
Chair: **Franziska Desch** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)