Abstract:
The last few decades have witnessed a flowering of interest in the history of chronic-degenerative diseases and, in particular, the study of cancer, which emerged as a specific field of enquiry that has revitalised the area of history of science and medicine. The centrality of cancer for scientific and technological innovations alongside the social demands in relation to policies and practices to control the disease became an area of study for a range of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities: anthropology, sociology, psychology, health studies, history of science, and in notably the social studies of science. At the same time, the long-standing trajectory of patients’ experiences and attitudes towards the disease as well as the specific ways in which nations have attempted to control the disease at different periods have captured the attention of historians of medicine. A wide range of themes have emerged from research investigating what we call ‘cancer studies’: the relationship between gender and cancer; the notions of risk and early detection; patients’ perspectives; prevention campaigns and policies; cancer therapies and military medicine; and the configuration of medical specialities; amongst others. These studies have contributed to our understanding of the impact of local medical cultures –practices and polices- in the control of the disease, as well as the process of knowledge exchange between Europa and the Americas in relation to notions of cancer, technology, and experimental research, thus revealing the association of certain phenomenon from a global perspective. In addition, new historical perspectives have offered a more comprehensive reading of past events and their relationship to current challenges associated with the disease for both an academic and non-academic public.

This symposium will gather together researchers from different countries and disciplines with the aim of adding depth to an interdisciplinary approach for the discussion of cancer and the complex intersections between local and global perspectives. We will explore historical and contemporary issues related to the disease, such as, knowledge production; public health interventions; patients’ responses; access to treatments; and therapeutic developments. In this sense, a key aspect will be to emphasise the role of interdisciplinary perspectives within history and social sciences to our understanding of current oncological problems. The symposium will also seek to explore new theoretical frameworks and forms of engagement with policy-makers, professionals and institutions directly involved with the control of the disease at different locations.

Keywords: Cancer studies – interdisciplinary perspectives – history and social sciences – knowledge, public health, treatments, patients’ care – local and global interactions.
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