S-60 – (Un)Bounded Doctors?: Nation, Profession, and Place in the Local and Global Formation of Medical Groups in the 19th and 20th Centuries

History Of Medicine And Public Health

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Abstract:
The rise of industrial societies around the world during the nineteenth century and at the turn of the twentieth century made health a central concern. Governments seeking to cope with the Malthusian catastrophic vision of society that resulted from unrestrained population growth believed that public health intervention would mitigate the burden of disease in overcrowded and increasingly polluted cities and towns as well as in the rural countryside with minimal or null access to health services. The hopes of these social architects in the nineteenth century lied in a combination of campaigns for social regeneration and preventative measures that resulted from the emergent field of bacteriology. Increasingly throughout the twentieth century, societies regarded health as a citizens’ right and the state as the responsible for fulfilling it. In this context, doctors trained in the positivist medical sciences emerged as key actors in the provision of health and as symbols of healthy states.

This symposium explores the convoluted narratives of the emergence of doctors as emisaries of health during the rise of industrial societies and the consolidation of nation-states in the Americas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather than assuming a colonial narrative where American societies incorporate European public health strategies to bring health to society, the symposium aims to analyze how the global trend to train and distribute doctors across national territories and beyond them faced local challenges that facilitated, hindered, or halted the mobilization of doctors, their knowledges, and their practices. Bringing case studies from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, and Mexico, this symposium discusses the role of nation, nationalism, professionalization of doctors, political and professional boundaries, center and periphery (both at the national and international level), and the local and the global in the medicalization of society in the Americas. Some of the questions that they explore are how different nation-states across the Americas coped with the lack of resources to train doctors in state-of-the-art medical practices; how the demographics and geographies of each nation-state in the Americas influenced the mobilization and distribution of doctors; what role medical knowledges that conflicted with biomedicine played in resisting or complementing that of doctors trained in biomedicine; how processes of urbanization influenced the training, distribution, and professional identity of doctors; what role national identities and processes of nation-building played in the formation of professional identities among doctors and their patriotic duty; and how global processes impacted the mobilization of doctors across national borders.
Keywords: 19th and 20th Centuries – Biomedicine and Contending Medical Theories – Nation, Nationalism, and Nation-building – Professionalization and Professional Identity – Urbanization’s Impact on the Provision and Distribution of Doctors.

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