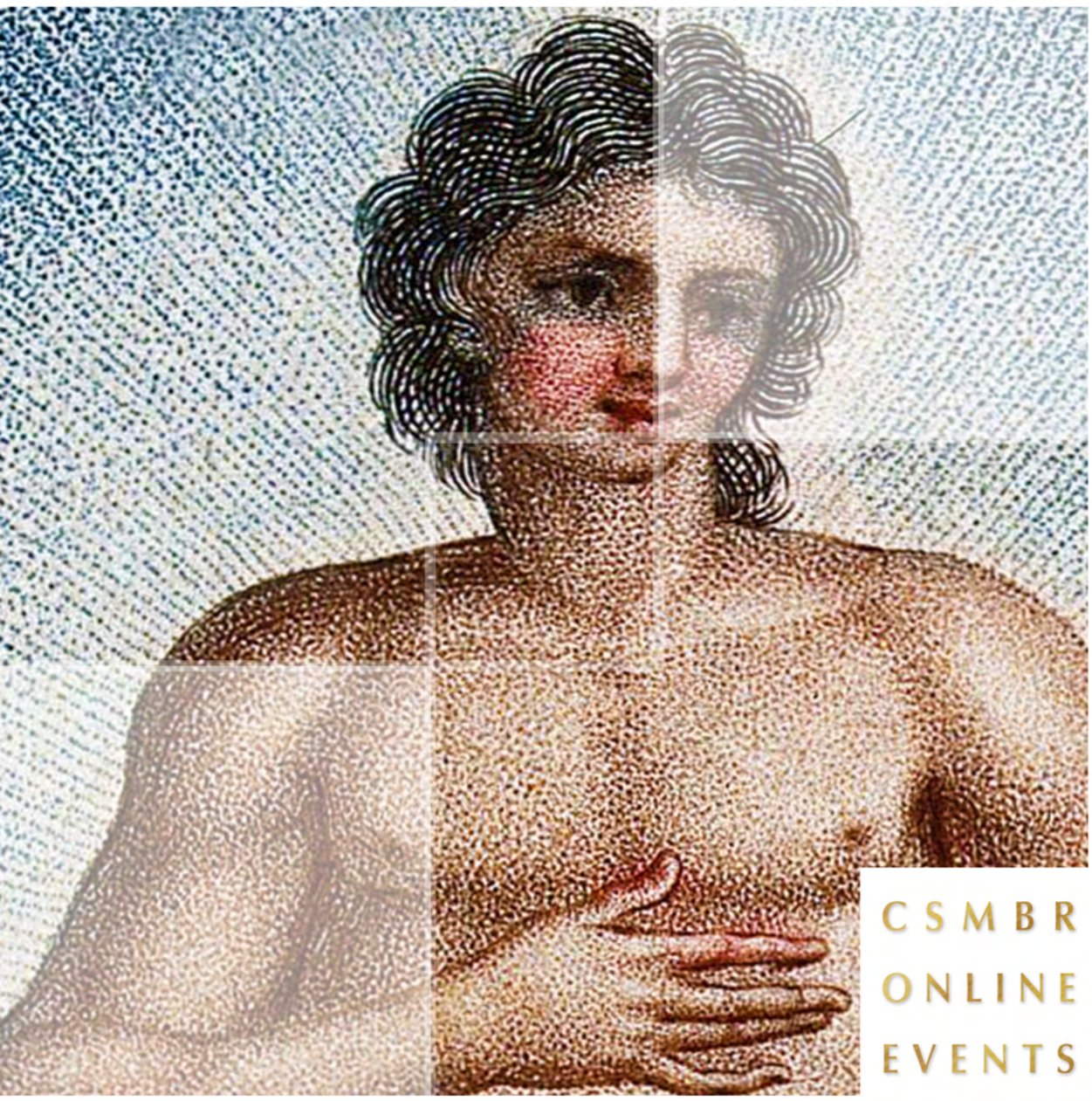

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF MEDICINE AND THE BODY IN THE RENAISSANCE

INSTITUTIO SANTORIANA
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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL' ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA

Julius-Maximilians-
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PSMEMM
Palgrave Studies in Medieval & Early Modern Medicine

CSMBR
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EVENTS

SWEAT IT OUT !

6 DECEMBER 2022
5.00 pm CET

INSENSIBLE PERSPIRATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

RUBEN VERWAAL • University of Durham

This paper argues how perspiration could undergo a drastic reconceptualisation in eighteenth-century medicine. Thanks to Santorio Santori's famous studies with the weighing chair, the ancient notion of insensible perspiration continued to be perceived as essential to one's health. But despite its emphasis on quantification, Santorio's work reflected long-standing views on perspiration closely aligned to digestion and health as balance of humours. Dutch physicians of the Boerhaave school instead paid particular attention to the role of microscopic nerves and nervous juice. Johannes de Gorter, for example, incorporated chemical examinations and neurological descriptions to develop a more detailed theory of the internal physiology of perspiration. It allowed him to explain diseases like catarrh (similar to the common cold), and to justify the efficacy of his preferred treatment—sal ammoniac—which made his patients sweat out the disease. So the concept of insensible perspiration continued to play a pivotal role in the preservation of health throughout the early modern period. Yet how it exactly worked, changed significantly at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The event is free to attend but registration is required. Info at csmbr.fondazionecomel.org