MEASURING HEALTH AND THE BODY

25 JANUARY 2022
10.00 am CET

Size, weight, and pulse in medical theory and practice

Organised by MARSHA WUBELS • University of Exeter

Expressing the Pulse in Seventeenth-Century England: Idioms, Numbers, & Measurement

Food and Fat: Creating Body Size in Early Modern Germany

A Weighly Matter: Understanding Santorio’s ‘Healthful Standard’ and Early Modern Body-Weighing Practices

Using Big Numbers. The Meaning and Purpose of Weight Indications in Medical Texts on Corpulence, c. 1600-1900

Yijie Huang
University of Cambridge

Holly Fletcher
University of Sussex

Marsha Wubbels
University of Exeter

Alexander Pyrges
University of Würzburg

Taking measurement of the body is all but standard practice in modern medicine. Indeed, we rely to a great extent on figures such as our body weight and our heart rate to inform us of the state of our health. This seminar will present how and why the pre-modern body was measured and explore how new methods of measuring, quantifying, and understanding the body affected early modern medical theory and practice. The individual papers presented will all explore how different aspects of the body such as fat, blood, and excreta, were measured using various instruments and research methods. As such, this seminar will address a myriad of questions, relating to how new instruments and methods of measurements affected medical theory and practice, to what extent they challenged or reinforced existing knowledge, how measurements helped to determine what was healthy and unhealthy, normal and abnormal, and how researching this can help us understand how early modern society understood the relationship between the body and its environment.