



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

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA



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

CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS

THE BODY AND THE STARS

21
OCTOBER
2025
5.00 pm CET

NEW EVIDENCE ON EARLY MODERN ASTRO-MEDICINE IN THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE VITALI ARCHIVE

SERENA MAMBRIANI • University of Parma — Yale University

"Do celestial bodies influence human beings?" This question, central to early modern debates on astrology's role in medicine, was deeply significant to Buonafede Vitali Senior (1686–1745), a court physician in Parma during the reign of Philip of Bourbon, and his son, Buonafede Vitali Junior, who continued his father's legacy in medicine and science. Both father and son would answer this question affirmatively, convinced of the profound connections

between natural astrology and medical knowledge and advocating for astrology's role in advancing medical understanding. Utilizing archival materials from the Vitali Verga Archive, part of the State Archives of Parma, this study examines the historical transition of astrology from a mathematical system that integrated astronomy and natural philosophy to a practice dismissed as folk superstition. By contextualizing the Vitali

family's contributions within evolving medical theory, this research sheds light on how astrology informed early medical practices, highlighting the dynamic interplay between tradition and emerging scientific methods in shaping paradigms that sought to connect the cosmos with human health. Through a critical analysis of Vitalis' astro-medical and hermetic texts, this paper examines how they wove astrological concepts into medical practice, considering celestial influences as key in diagnosing and treating disease, situating their work within broader 18th-century debates on astrology's relevance to health.

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