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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

UNCERTAIN DYNAMICS

4
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2025
5.00 pm CET

ESTÊVÃO RODRIGUES DE CASTRO ON THE DIAGNOSIS OF CHANGING DISEASES

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In the early modern period, physicians such as Prospero Alpini (1553–1617) demonstrated growing interest in the mutation of symptoms and diseases, as well as in how they succeeded one another or migrated through bodily parts. In 1627, the Portuguese physician Estêvão Rodrigues de Castro (1559–1637) entered this debate with the publication of the *Quae ex quibus* (lit. “The things out of which”) in Florence — a ‘quaint title’ that seemingly echoed

Hippocratic concerns, but in fact concealed a fully-fledged attempt to explain disease transformation. While relatively unknown today, the work circulated widely across early modern Europe, being republished in France and Germany and read by physicians such as Werner Rolfinck (1599–1673) and Anne Charles Lorry (1726–1783). The enduring fortune of the *Quae ex quibus* was linked to the novelty of its topic, which for the

first time focused on the process of disease change and the epistemological tools required to identify it. This paper will explore how Castro develops a diagnostic grammar of disease change and propagation, granting autonomy to concepts, such as *metaptosis*, *epigenesis*, and *metastasis*, which had remained peripheral in medical reasoning until the early seventeenth century. Ultimately, the *Quae ex quibus* introduced a major change in the way diagnosis was formulated: in an age of uncertainty, Castro taught physicians to focus their attention not only on the stable and predictable symptoms but also on uncertain dynamics that were difficult to, recognise, anticipate, and cure.

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