

The Reilly Center Program for
Health Humanities and Society
presents

Medicine's Forgotten Histories: A Day in the Life of an Eighteenth-Century Hospital Physician



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Thursday, Nov. 11, 2021

4:00pm – 6:00pm EST

311 DeBartolo Hall

What was it like to be a hospital physician in eighteenth-century Europe? What were encounters between hospital physicians and their patients like? What disease categories did physicians use and what treatment strategies did they employ? Physicians have left numerous case histories that modern historians use to answer these questions. But those case histories, even if written in a hospital context, tend to be divorced from the hospital cultures in which they were produced. They tell us a lot about medical theory and very little about medical practice. But hospital medical practice was shaped by more than doctors and academic medical theory. It may come as a surprise to learn that overshadowing medical practice were the interests of cost- and space-conscious hospital administrators whose concerns about overcrowding and financial sustainability were the ultimate fashioners of the hospital's admission and treatment policies. The battle cry of administrators even then seemed to be "no money, no mission." This paper uses an array of archival documents in one 18th-century hospital to show the role economic realities and administrative prerogatives played in shaping medical practice.



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