

Narrative Medicine: Ancient and Modern Perspectives

Utrecht, 16 November 2023, 16.00–18.00hrs, Location TBD.

Narrative medicine is coming into focus for a growing number of researchers from various academic disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach aims to provide practicing physicians with the tools to better understand the patient's experiences and factor them in in therapy. Some 1800 years ago, the Greek physician Galen of Pergamum already used stories to communicate medical issues and theories. With this event, we bring together these two worlds through a conversation between two experts—one in the budding field of narrative medicine, the other in ancient medicine. They will focus on questions such as: what are the principles underlying narrative-based healthcare then and now? What are its specific advantages in medical practice? Which are points of contact and difference between the ancient and the modern approach? What can be gained from comparing these two worlds?

We are excited to announce that our two confirmed speakers will be dr. Megan Milota (UU, <https://www.sg.uu.nl/sprekers/megan-milota>), who now works at De Nieuwe Utrechtse School and was a member of the only Narrative Medicine department in the world (Columbia University); and prof. dr. Philip van der Eijk (Humboldt Universität, <https://www.klassphil.hu-berlin.de/en/avh-professur/staff/vandereijk>), who directs the Alexander von Humboldt research group on Classics and the History of Science. The speakers will both deliver presentations of 20-25 minutes (in English), followed by a short coffee break. After the break, there will be ample time for questions and discussion among participants and speakers, moderated by one of the organizers. We will ask the speakers to prepare a set of talking points to help us get started. After the meeting, there will be a borrel: first drinks are on us!

This event will also re-launch the Dutch Society for Ancient Medicine, a forum where those interested in the (ancient) history of medicine can gather and discuss issues related to ancient and modern medicine. The organizing board consists of scholars of ancient medicine from Utrecht and Leiden, and is spearheaded by prof. Teun Tieleman (Utrecht University). We envision this to be the first in a series of events in this dialogue format. Our aim with these sessions is to have the participants think of daily modern medical practice in a different light; by adding the ancient perspective, we will encourage participants to think about issues such as the cultural specificity of biology and medicine—why do we in the Netherlands today think about bodies in the way we do? And is it the only way? These sessions will be conducted both in Dutch and English, depending on the speakers.

Those interested in participating can register with Glyn Muijtens (g.muijtens@hum.leidenuniv.nl). Everyone is welcome to join—whether you are a medical professional or simply interested in the history of medicine. We especially encourage students to sign up. Registration is free but spots are limited. We hope to welcome many of you in Utrecht!

On behalf of Teun Tieleman, Chiara Cecconi & Glyn Muijtens