

## INTRODUCTION

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This is the second time that Barcelona hosts a meeting of the European Association of Museums of the History of Medical Sciences (EAMHMS), the previous one in 1990. After almost three decades, Barcelona has now a double mission: on the one hand, the whole committee has been working hard to strengthen the drive operated in the stimulating previous conferences hosted in Edinburgh (2008), Copenhagen (2010), Berlin (2012), London (2014) and Groningen (2016). By following this track we are offering a variety of perspectives and cases not only to go deep in the material culture of medicine but also to reach more and different audiences through strategic alliances with other disciplines. It seems apparent that medical collections and medical museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must go beyond the museum walls and have to embrace those practices related to contemporary art, digital tools of communication and science teaching. This was the main reason that led us to explore new ways of thinking the museum basics –collecting/researching, exhibiting/communicating, and teaching/learning – through perspectives that take digital tools into account and new lines of research that are fostered by enriching perspectives such as contemporary art and the history of art, or the history of scientific technology, medical education and practice and the medical entrepreneurial business. In a world of an increasing consuming history, medical museums have so much to offer to different kind of publics.

On the other hand, the 2018 Congress opens the door wide and becomes a turning point in the history of the EAMHMS. Originally born as European, those interested in the material culture of medicine have made this a

worldwide association. While organizing this Congress we have been also working hard on this idea and cordially encouraged colleagues from Southern and Eastern European, Asian and Latin American countries to participate in this conference. We did receive several dozens of expressions of interest coming from everywhere and unfortunately our scientific committee had to choose according to the programmatic axes of the congress. As host organizers we were proud of this response and so we decided to draw again all the plan in order to open room to more speakers. However not everybody has been invited and we regret this and propose opening the debate to reframe the whole organization of the event. Furthermore and according to this idea of widening our field of study, we have tried to attract curators and historians interested in scientific and university collections. This is why we have invited Marta Lourenço, acting President of the International Committee for University Museum and Collections (UMAC), in order to explore and share about 21<sup>st</sup> century curatorial practices and to debate around the use of collections for research. In this initiative we have been backed by Sébastien Soubiran, who is now President of the executive committee of Universeum, the network for the European Academic Heritage. As an important part of our medical collections stems from university practices and practitioners, it seems useful to establish a linkage with those curators and scholars interested in protecting the scientific heritage and expanding the ways of knowing and enhancing access to the collections beyond the museum walls.

This booklet not only gathers the extended abstracts of some of the participants of the Congress. It's firstly open with a relevant reflection on curatorial practices regarding medical history collections by Thomas Schnalke, acting President of the EAMHMS. According to his long experience as historian, curator and manager of medical collections at the Charité, Thomas Schnalke highlights some points we all should keep in mind when asking about how to take advantage of the objects of our collections as medical objects not only convey knowledge and meaning but its forms carry and generate emotions that help to humanise medicine. He warns that we must not lose sight of the fact that in order to get new publics, not only historians of science or medical students but also those scholars interested in the material culture of medicine and all people engaged with contemporary understanding of medical practices, it is necessary to create specific media and contexts of training with objects. So, all resources, especially those related to digitisation, are welcome to meet the big issue of fostering participation. And if we want to add some extra value in comparison with other museum and collection, we should contribute to develop strategies to make a participative citizen regarding medical science. A campaign for minimum working conditions seems to be a starting point in order to succeed

in making objects to speak. But this is not always possible, as we can see in the Medical History Museum (MHM) that hosts this congress. Despite the interest of the College of Physicians of Barcelona for the fate of the MHM, medical heritage seems not worthy enough from the point of view of public cultural institutions, pharmaceutical and medical local concerns and so on. This is the reason why we cannot offer a visit to our non-existent premises and why we resort to some spectacular old medical buildings as sites of our congress. Notwithstanding this, we still work through our medical collection in those basic areas of a museum: research, teaching and communication.

In addition to this starting point, this booklet also allows to see how our colleagues come up with a variety of strategies to make fruitful encounters in the triangle formed by the medical collection, the museum resources and the audiences. In this congress we have structured our program in seven sessions. First one is devoted to what we call *synergies*, a word that here refers to how is managed in the exhibition the intersection among the patient voice, the medical expert and the scientific citizen and how some ethical questions are addressed in order to engage audiences. Secondly, there is an interesting session devoted to explain quite different American initiatives on medical heritage and its users and uses regarding such different matters as the relationship with artists or scientists, teaching practices, the exploration of the concept of interactivity or the efforts to establish a collaborative network of institutions devoted to the study and teaching use of medical objects. Third session has a format of short and sharp presentations related to eight national case studies addressing different medical and museological issues. Session four is devoted to the question of digitisation in the medical museum through the presentation of four projects and exhibitions that involve the use of digital technologies in the exhibition plan. Again, the absolutely not innocent concept of interactivity is at stake here. In session five there are several papers interested in the perspective of art and artists in the conception of some medical objects or in the development of critical presentations. A similar trend is followed in the sixth session, which is dedicated to explore how some medical objects both awakens some feelings and convey controversial meanings. Finally, the last session of the congress has been thought to the presentation of four museum initiatives based on specific medical objects that show the usefulness of collections in medical teaching and public engagement and the search for socially-useful strategies to present critically contemporary health matters.

Finally, as Thomas Schnalke states in his paper, we hope this congress also follows that trend of those “perennially vibrant and inspiring biennial

congresses” of the EAMHMS. As organizers of this edition we just hope this wish comes true and all participants enjoy a fruitful and stimulating stay in Barcelona. To end, some words of acknowledgement must be written. The 19th European Association of Museums of the History of Medical Sciences biennial Congress takes place in Barcelona (Spain), 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018, and is jointly hosted between the Medical History Museum in Catalonia, the Catalan Society for the History of Science and Technology (IEC), the Spanish Research Council (IMF), the Royal Academy of Medicine in Catalonia and the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site. We want to thank Sara Fajula, Emma Sallent and Eva Gil for their help in every administrative and organizative detail. We also thank to Jim Edmonson, Phil Loring, José Pardo-Tomás, Mario Ruisinger, Thomas Schnalke and Lisa Sputnes Mouwitz for their comments as members of the scientific committee. We must also mention the support of the following institutions: Col·legi de Metges de Barcelona, Fundació Uriach 1838, Institut d’Estudis Catalans, Institució Milà i Fontanals (CSIC), Reial Acadèmia de Medicina de Catalunya, Recinte Modernista de Sant Pau, Barcelona Knowledge Hub & Academia Europaea, Residència d’Investigadors, and the collaboration of the next medical schools: Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universitat Pompeu Fabra and Universitat de Girona.