

## Seminar

on Thursday May 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, 16:00 (seminar room ground floor)

# Promises of salvation and success monitoring in medicine since 1800

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**Prof. Dr. Flurin Condrau (Center for Medical Humanities, University of Zurich, CH)**

This presentation will deal with the long history of medical success. The starting point will be a brief analysis of claims of success during the professional development of scientific medicine in the nineteenth century. This will be followed by deeper reading of the so-called McKeown controversy. This debate aims to explain reasons for the immense decline in mortality since the mid-nineteenth century and thus allows to problematize possible measurements for the effectiveness of medicine. The paper will then proceed to the first clinical trials for streptomycin after the second world war and argue that this, too, is a historically, socially and culturally specific form of assessing medical success. The presentation will close out with a few remarks on Evidence-Based-Medicine as a specific format within which to assess the relative merits of medicine.



Flurin Condrau was born in Zurich, Switzerland. He studied history, economics and sociology at the University of Zurich, graduating in 1992. He pursued his doctoral research on the history of tuberculosis at the University of Munich in Germany, where he gained his Dr. phil. in 1992. From 2001 until 2011, he held tenured positions at the universities of Sheffield and Manchester. In 2011, he returned to Switzerland to take up the chair in the history of medicine at the University of Zurich. Flurin Condrau's research has focused on the history of infection. He has contributed notable studies on the history of cholera as well as the history of tuberculosis. This research has highlighted the interplay of infection, medical knowledge and the continuous reframing of diseases through time. This research has led him to become an internationally recognized expert in *disease history*, building on the work by Erwin H. Ackerknecht, who argued in the 1950s already that disease is as much a cultural than a purely biological entity. In addition, Condrau is also researching the history of medical therapy and claims of medical success after the Second World War.

### Organisation:

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