



The Dynamics of Medical Transformations: Society, Technology, Knowledge and Ethics

38th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE, 25 – 28 August 2026

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 25 August	SANDERS BUILDING, CAMPUS 'WOUDESTEIN', ERASMUS UNIVERSITY BURGEMEESTER OUDLAAN 50, 3062 PA ROTTERDAM
16.00 -17.30	REGISTRATION
17.30 - 17.45	OPENING CEREMONY SPEAKERS: ANA BOROVECKI – PRESIDENT ESPMH (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL MEDICINE AND ORGANIZATION OF HEALTH CARE, UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB, CROATIA) ANNELIEN BREDENOORD – PRESIDENT OF ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM'S EXECUTIVE BOARD, PROF OF ETHICS IN (BIOMEDICAL) TECHNOLOGIES (ERASMUS SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS) ROOM: 0-04
17.45 - 18.45	Plenary session: TAMAR SHARON (FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES; INTERDISCIPLINARY HUB FOR DIGITALIZATION AND SOCIETY, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands) TITLE: “ Technosolutionism and the redefinition of problems and values in healthcare: The case of empathetic chatbots ” <i>Chair: Maartje Schermer</i> ROOM: 0-04
19.00 – 20.30	WELCOME RECEPTION - VENUE: MARIA'S CANTINA, BAYLE BUILDING

Wednesday 26 August (morning)	SANDERS BUILDING, CAMPUS ‘WOUDESTEIN’, ERASMUS UNIVERSITY
10.30-12.25	Session 1.7 ROOM: 0-04 Special Seminar: The ethics of diagnostic and predictive biomarkers Chair: Eline Bunnik Topic: Diagnostic and prediction biomarkers are rapidly emerging across many fields of medicine. These biomarkers are widely presented as valuable tools for research, for example by enabling targeted recruitment and the identification of early pathological changes. In clinical practice, biomarkers promise earlier diagnosis and (risk) prediction, potentially supporting earlier intervention and more “personalised” treatment. However, the development and implementation of biomarkers raise important ethical and conceptual questions. Limited accuracy can lead to harm, including overdiagnosis, misclassification, or incorrect predictions of future disease. Even when accurate, early diagnosis and (risk) prediction may cause psychological distress, alter a person’s experience of illness, or increase stigma, particularly when effective treatments are limited. At a broader level, the ongoing “biomarkerisation” reflects a medical transformation in which biological markers, rather than clinical symptoms, become increasingly central to how disease is understood. Biomarkers may influence not only how disease is diagnosed, but also how it is conceptualised, studied, and, when possible, treated. This shift may support earlier detection but also raises questions about how a growing focus on biomarkers reshapes concepts of health, risk, and disease, and how these changes affect research participants, (future) patients, and medicine and society more broadly. Drawing on our empirical research on biomarker use in neurodegenerative diseases and psychiatry, this session will address questions such as: What value do biomarkers offer for research and healthcare, and which ethical concerns may arise? How do biomarkers transform concepts of disease, and what follows from these shifts? And how can ethicists evaluate and guide their development and implementation? This seminar brings together four short presentations followed by an open discussion to examine what the increasing focus on biomarkers means for research participants, patients, healthcare, and society. Contributions - Max Rensink (Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam, Netherlands): “The role of biomarkers in predicting onset for Huntington’s disease and Spinocerebellar ataxias: an ethical analysis” - Charlotte Graafland (Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam, Netherlands): “Ethical considerations regarding disclosure of onset-predictive biomarker results in genetic frontotemporal dementia (FTD)” - Signe Mežinska & Ivars Neiders (Institute of Clinical and Preventive Medicine, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia): “Risk prediction for severe mental illness: ethical insights from lived experience” - Lennart van der Molen (IQ Health Science Department, Radboudumc, Nijmegen, the Netherlands): “Biomarking the Brain: A comparison of conceptual implications for multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease”

Wednesday 26 August (afternoon)	SANDERS BUILDING, CAMPUS 'WOUDESTEIN', ERASMUS UNIVERSITY
14.00-15.00	Special seminar 2.8 ROOM: 0-12 Young Scholar Award Winners 2026 <i>Chair: Péter Kakuk</i> The European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (ESPMH) is annually granting two awards for young scholars for scientific contributions addressing ethical, epistemological, or other philosophical issues related to medicine and healthcare. Submissions must be single-authored, original, unpublished works. The first-place award includes €2,000, and the second-place award €1,500 (both intended to support travel and accommodation costs for attending). This year's awards have been granted to Zachary Daus (first award), and Aaron Gray (second award). Contributions • Zachary Daus (PhD Candidate Philosophy, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia): “Death, Existentialism and the Personalised Patient Preference Predictor” • Aaron Gray (PhD Candidate Philosophy, Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA): “Personhood, Precedent Autonomy, and Stopping Eating and Drinking in Dementia Care”

Friday 28 August (morning)	SANDERS BUILDING, CAMPUS 'WOUDESTEIN', ERASMUS UNIVERSITY
10.30-12.55	Session 5.8 ROOM: 0-04 Special Seminar: Philosophies of Matti Häyry: Consequential Controversies <i>Chair: Tuija Takala</i> Topic: Professor Matti Häyry has been an influential figure in bioethics since the late 1980s. His early applied writings included contributions on HIV, abortion and euthanasia. In the following decades much of his attention was on the ethics of genetics culminating in his Rationality and the Genetic Challenge: Making People Better? (Cambridge University Press, 2010), and recently he has become a leading scholar in the field of antinatalism. On the more theoretical side, his Liberal Utilitarianism and Applied Ethics (Routledge, 1994) provided a coherent theory for applied ethics, his conceptual studies on key bioethical concepts such as autonomy, dignity, precaution and solidarity have helped clarify the discussions, and his work on justice (most recently in Roles of Justice in Bioethics, Cambridge University Press, 2022) has expanded the scope of bioethical enquiry. This year, professor Häyry celebrates his 70th birthday. To mark the occasion, this session brings together scholars to reflect on a variety of themes in his philosophy. Each participant will give a short account on their chosen topic, but for the most, the session will proceed as a panel discussion and towards the end, there will be time for questions from the audience. Contributions • Gardar Arnason (University of Akureyri, Iceland) • Rebecca Bennett (University of Manchester, UK) • Tom Buller (Illinois State University, USA) • Steven Firth (University of Helsinki, Finland) • Søren Holm (University of Manchester, UK) • Rosamond Rhodes (Mount Sinai School of Medicine, USA) • Kadri Simm (University of Tartu, Estonia) • Amanda Sukenick (University of Chicago, USA) Respondent: Matti Häyry (Aalto University, Finland)



Keynote speakers

“Clashing world-views in the ethics of AI and the need for a multi-level perspective”



[Vincent Blok](#) is a professor of Philosophy of AI at the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Rotterdam. Blok is interested in the meaning of disruptive technologies for the human condition and its environment and studies these phenomena from a continental philosophical perspective. His research interests include philosophy of technology, environmental philosophy and responsible innovation.

“Transforming Medical Categories: From Disease Entities to Health Identities”



[Lara Keuck](#) is a professor of history and philosophy of medicine at the History and Philosophy of Medicine Group at the Institute for Studies of Science of Bielefeld University. Her research focuses on the historical and epistemological question of how knowledge about disease has changed over time.

“Technosolutionism and the redefinition of problems and values in healthcare: The case of empathetic chatbots”



[Tamar Sharon](#) is Professor of Philosophy, Digitalization and Society at Radboud University in the Netherlands, where she co-directs the Interdisciplinary Hub for Digitalization and Society (iHub). She researches how digitalization destabilizes core values of healthcare and other public sectors and how best to protect them. Tamar is a member of the European Commission’s European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) and the Royal Netherlands Academy for Arts and Sciences.

“Biopolitical and Eugenic Legacies in the Transformation of Reproductive Technologies”



[Judit Sandor](#) is a full professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Legal Studies and Gender Studies of the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. Among many other things, she leads the ERC project: Taming the European Leviathan: The Legacy of Post-War Medicine and the Common Good.