

## **Health Professions in Transition**

Organisers:

Research Committee “Sociology of Health and Medicine”, Swiss Association of Sociology

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Chronic diseases along with the general population's increased attention to health issues - are challenging today's health care systems. The central value of health in our societies has been reinforced, with increased attention paid to disease management, risk prevention and health promotion. Health has been partly reinterpreted in a salutogenetic perspective, and the “preventive self” has become a socially leading figure. The public's expectations towards their health care system are changing as a result of the wider access to knowledge about health and disease provided by new information technologies. Demographic trends and medical advances keep fuelling the growing costs of health care, and economic, especially managerial criteria determine more and more the thinking and the acting in the health care system. Lay people are regularly involved in activities around health and disease, through their permanent surveillance of behaviours influencing health, but also through the care they provide to the chronically ill.

These multifaceted changes are influencing the fields of action and the work conditions of those who are active in the health sector. Health and disease are approached through more and more complex and multi-centred processes, and the boundaries are shifting between classical medicine and institutions that not only heal the sick but also preserve the health of the healthy. The medical profession has been progressively losing the dominant status it had at the time such pioneers as Parsons and Freidson were writing. Long-existing bodies of health professionals struggle with newly emerging professional groups to obtain recognition and status in the system. New training programmes for professionals orientated towards long-term therapy or health promotion – for example for nurses or occupational therapists – are helping redefine the respective activities and roles of health occupations. This changing division of labour generates tension – or even conflict – between professions and between professional associations. To facilitate the organisation of this complex system health professionals are expected not only to acquire specialised and science-based knowledge, but also obtain additional qualifications in interdisciplinary work and co-operation, and self-reflection.

The planned session aims at analysing and explaining these transformations of health professions in the social and organizational context of recent decades.

**Deadline to submit your abstract: 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2015**



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