



Encounters and engagements: creating new agendas for medical anthropology

EASA Medical Anthropology Network
AAA Society for Medical Anthropology
Universitat Rovira i Virgili

Joint international conference.
June 12th-14th 2013. Tarragona, Spain.

**EASA Medical Anthropology Network / AAA Society for Medical Anthropology /
Universitat Rovira i Virgili Joint International Conference, Tarragona, Spain**

*** THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE! <http://www.medical-anthropology-urv.cat/> ***

June 12-15th 2013

Thematic focus

Encounters and engagements – it is hard to imagine anthropology of any sort without them, and they are central to the practices and concerns of medical anthropology in particular. While ‘encounters’ suggests meetings and convergence, the question of when, where and on what terms an encounter takes place may raise issues of conflict, displacement and exclusion.

The consultation of clients and health professionals, patients and healers, has been of central concern to medical anthropologists, yet the domain of medical anthropology extends well beyond the encounters that occur through healing work in health settings. Encounters may involve the senses, feelings and emotions – desires, disappointments, pleasure and suffering – or they may be dispassionate, cold and clinical. Encounters can also involve quasi- or non-human agents – microbes, spirits, pharmaceuticals, medical technologies, experiments, governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, weapons and words (amongst many others). They may be real, virtual or imagined, active or passive. And they may engender change of all sorts, leading to new identities, forms and trajectories.

By ‘engagements’, we recall the rich history of medical anthropologists’ engagement in change processes, in many different roles, in some cases collaborating with biomedical institutions to adapt their programs to social realities, in other cases engaging with recipients by giving voice to their concerns. Through such engagements with diverse actors, medical anthropologists have developed a host of new ways of doing research. It is this positionality of the medical anthropologist, and this mode of interaction with other disciplines and actors, that makes our work unique and important.

A conference like no other...

This Joint International Conference is designed to foster intellectual encounters between engaged/applied and academic medical anthropologists from around the world. The location and format of this pioneering conference will promote the exploration of convergences and divergences between theories, practices, schools and regions across the broader community of medical anthropology scholars and practitioners globally. The conference is being organized by the American Anthropological Association’s Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA), the European Association of Social Anthropologists’ (EASA) Medical Anthropology Network, and the Department of Anthropology, Philosophy and Social Work, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Tarragona, Spain.

Submitting abstracts: The theme ‘encounters and engagements’ has been chosen not only for the theoretical focus it offers, but to reflect the organisers’ aspirations about what this unique conference will be like. Hence, rather than soliciting pre-formed panels, or panel abstracts relating to particular topics or

themes, the organisers are inviting all contributors to use the broad framework provided by the overarching 'encounters and engagement' theme as a basis for developing their 250 word (maximum) conference abstracts for a paper or poster. These should be based on original research and/or analysis – be it theoretical or empirical. The abstracts will form the basis for a more detailed program, which will be designed to generate cumulative and inclusive discussions in ten parallel thematic conference streams, each containing a number of panels.

Streams: Abstracts will initially be considered by a Scientific Committee who will allocate them to one of ten emergent streams deriving from the content of the submissions. Each stream will be led by a group of two scholars who will use them to identify and organize a series of five panels in their stream. Stream leaders will write an initial *thinkpiece* which explains the debates they expect will take place in their stream (based on their review of abstracts), and will work with panelists on how to focus and refine their presentations (with the possibility of resubmitting abstracts, if appropriate). Stream leaders will also draw up plans for how to conduct their panels, aiming for a variety of formats, including (but not limited to) fifteen minute presentations and posters.

Uploading papers in advance (optional): In order to encourage and enhance the level of discussion in the streams, participants are encouraged to prepare their work and upload it on the conference website for others to read in advance. We recognise that some people may not be able to do this, hence it is an optional element, but we strongly encourage participants to follow this approach if they possibly can (and for others contributing to a particular stream to read them!). Papers should be no more than 3,000 words in length; presentations at the conference should be summaries and reflections on these papers, not the papers themselves.

Summing up - challenges for the future: At the end of the conference, the stream leaders will write brief endnotes summing up the key points from their stream and their implications for future trajectories and challenges in medical anthropology. This approach, we hope, will bring together people from many different modes of practice, schools and regions in what we hope will be mutually inspiring encounters generating long-lasting engagements. Through the reconnaissance of individuals, subjects and theories, we anticipate the start of new and exciting agendas in the discipline.

Skills-sharing workshops: in addition the conference will host a series of workshops allowing medical anthropologists to share skills and exchange experiences with mixed methods studies, participatory video methods, the use of spatial methods and social media, network analysis, and the analysis of large volumes of qualitative data.

Participation of scholars, young and old: The conference will be preceded by the annual Medical Anthropology Young Scholars network meeting, enabling postgraduate students to attend both events if they wish. Bursaries for professional medical anthropologists (and some advanced graduate students) living in low income countries (sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, South and South East Asia, and parts of Central Asia) will be available through a generous grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Further information about these and all other aspects of the conference, abstract submission, registration, accommodation, transportation, special opportunities for visual anthropology and other matters are available on the conference website, <http://www.medical-anthropology-urv.cat/>. You can also reach it via links on both the SMA website (<http://www.medanthro.net/>) and the EASA Medical Anthropology Network website (<http://www.easaonline.org/networks/medical/index.shtml>).

The joint conference organising committee of the SMA, EASA medical anthropology network and the URV invite you to join with the spirit of the conference in order to create new agendas for medical anthropology in the historic and convivial city of Tarragona, Catalonia, Spain.

Deadline for abstracts: 15th February 2013

Deadline for notification of acceptance/rejection: 15th March 2013

Program uploaded on conference website: 12th April 2013

Deadline for uploading papers to conference website (optional): 31st May 2013