Announcement

CELLS RESEARCH SEMINAR
SUMMER SEMESTER 2025

Marcel Mertz/ Ilvie Prince, Hannover Medical School

Monday, 5 May 2025, 10.15-11.45am s.t.

ROOM 1930.A001 (Otto-Brenner-Str. 1)

Marcel Mertz studied philosophy and sociology at the University of Basel and completed his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Mannheim in 2015. In addition to his work at the MHH since 2011, he worked at the (then) Department of Medical and Health Ethics at the University Hospital Basel, at the Philosophical Seminar of the University of Mannheim and at the Ethics Research Unit of the University Hospital Cologne and the Cologne Center for Ethics, Rights, Economics and Social Sciences of Health (ceres) at the University of Cologne.

Ilvie Prince studied philosophy (of science) and history at Leibniz Universität Hannover and is currently working on her doctorate on the medical-pharmaceutical treatment and research of non-disease states using the example of hormonal contraceptives and the associated conceptual, ethical and epistemological challenges. In addition, she is an associate member of the DFG research group SOCRATES, which deals with questions of the credibility of science. Her research interests lie in the integration of ethics and social epistemology in medicine.

‘Ethics does not want to be convenient’ – A methodological proposal for processing ethical aspects in health technology assessment in the face of tensions between EBM standards, contract research and limited resources

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is the multidisciplinary and systematic evaluation of health technologies already in use. In addition to the evaluation of benefits and health economics, the social, organizational, legal and ethical aspects of a health technology are also addressed in full HTA reports. In Germany, such reports are commissioned by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) and written by external experts; the IQWiG specifies the basic processes, structure and standards for the HTA reports, which should normally be drafted within one year.However, the associated proposals for processing ethical aspects reveal a lack of understanding or misunderstanding of the ontological and epistemological basis of ethical aspects and their dependence on theory and processes. For example, it is assumed that ‘ethical aspects’ can be dealt with more or less independently of empirical aspects such as benefits, costs or preferences of technology users, etc., and that they should be included ‘additively’ in the conclusions of an HTA report, like the empirical aspects mentioned. In addition, the processing of ethical aspects must be based on the standards of evidence-based medicine (EBM) and must not contradict them, even if, for ethical or (related) reasons of philosophy of science, the dogmatic reference to these standards in the evaluation of some technologies becomes questionable. Finally, the publication of an HTA report depends on the institutional approval of IQWiG.We propose an alternative method for processing ethical aspects, in which ethical aspects are ontologically and epistemologically dependent on the results of the empirical HTA domains and are located at a meta-level due to supervenience. Ethical aspects are therefore not to be understood as ‘additive’, but as formative for any normative conclusion of an HTA report. This allows for a critical attitude towards EBM ideals, which are particularly important for the assessment of benefits. However, the proposed method recognizes the practical limitations of an HTA report and therefore remains realistic with regard to the breadth and depth of the examination of ethical aspects, as well as the fact that compromises must remain possible in contract research.