

Dr. Anna Lindemann
Sigmund Freud University Vienna
Hetzendorfer Straße 108/5 | 1120 Vienna, Austria
+43 650 5782041
anna.lindemann@univie.ac.at

The 7th Norwegian Conference on the History of Science: Call for Papers

Individual paper proposal:

Paper Title: “Clinical Observation and Objectivity in the 18th and 19th Century”

Keywords: clinical observation, objectivity, drug trials, human experiments, cocaine,
Sigmund Freud, Albrecht Erlenmeyer, pharmacology, 18th century, 19th century

Required equipment: projector

Abstract

This talk examines scientific drug trials on humans – specifically cocaine trials on morphine addicts in the 1880s – in order to explore concepts of objectivity. It draws on therapeutic trials that were inspired by Sigmund Freud and carried out by European asylum doctors in German-speaking countries. It demonstrates that, in the context of late nineteenth century pharmacology and clinical research, a concept of objectivity was in force that, prior to 1800, can already be found in theoretical pharmacological publications and that apparently persisted and was cultivated throughout the nineteenth century. This concept of objectivity, which targeted therapeutic trials and especially clinical observation, and which incorporates both observations and their interpretation, is neither identical nor compatible with the concepts of objectivity described by Daston and Galison (2007) and therefore deserves further investigation.