

Conference: Popular Health & Social Media

Call for Abstracts

University of Siegen (Germany)
12-13 September 2024

Conference organisation:
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People with chronic illnesses are often using medical and media technologies to improve their quality of life – or to be able to talk about quality of life again. This can be seen, for example, in the looping community, where people with type 1 diabetes automate their insulin intake, but also in pacing, where people suffering from chronic fatigue try to manage their own activities through self-tracking in order to prevent so-called crashes. In both cases, information on procedures, tips and tricks is often shared and consumed via various social media channels. We seek to address these issues in a conference aimed at discussing three thematic areas: (1) self-tracking, with a special focus on the management of (chronic) diseases, (2) chronic diseases and the use of social media, and (3) the examination of individual communities that change and shape their everyday lives with the help of social media and online communities. (ME/CFS and/or long/post-COVID syndrome, cardiovascular diseases, lipedema, etc.).

Questions we would like to address at this conference could be: what role do social media play in reference to medical professionals? What kinds of knowledge are shared via social media? To what extent does this form of lay expertise call medical authority into question? What are the specifics of the respective community with regard to the information that is exchanged? Are there, for instance, lay gatekeepers? How do individuals use the shared data and information? Do they implement these “instructions” and numbers unquestioningly? To what extent is there an empirical difference between voluntary self-measurement and the medically necessary collection of patient-generated data?

The three thematic areas will be covered in three distinct panels and each panel will be opened by a renowned expert in the field: (1) Rachael Kent (King’s College London, UK), (2) Amanda Karlsson (Aarhus Universitet, DK), and (3) Bianca Jansky (University of Augsburg, DE). With this call, we specifically invite predocs and early postdocs to participate in the panels by contributing insights and questions from their own research projects. The conference offers a focused and productive opportunity to share ideas and connect with peers. It is organised within the frame of and funded by the Collaborative Research Centre “Transformations of the Popular” at the University of Siegen, Germany. Accommodation and limited travel costs will be reimbursed.

Please send your abstract (approx. 350 words) by 15 June 2024 to Ann Kristin Augst (kristin.augst@tu-dortmund.de) and/or contact her in advance if you have any questions.