

PHARMACEUTICAL TRANSFORMATIONS: ADVANCED THERAPIES, PERSONALIZED MEDICINE AND THE REMAKING OF HEALTHCARE

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Abstract:

From an era of chemical mass production, significant transformations in the pharmaceutical sector currently pave the way for biological ‘niche’ products. Advanced therapies, such as gene and cell therapies and tissue-engineered products, are on the rise while diagnostic techniques are devised to distinguish between patients in still more fine-grained ways. Different concepts are evoked to signify those changes, including personalized medicine, precision medicine, stratified medicine and ‘orphanisation’.

These transformations spur hopes of new treatment options and the prevention of overtreatment. However, the advanced therapies come with unprecedentedly high pricing, evaluative challenges and new infrastructural demands. Along with the technoscientific developments, pressing questions about what may count as a ‘reasonable price’, ‘acceptable evidence’ and a ‘fair distribution’ of healthcare resources arise – and the answers have profound implications for patients’ access to new therapies and may also impact patient identities and societal notions of solidarity and equity.

This panel engages STS scholarship on the social, ethical and economic implications of medical innovation. We invite papers that analyze current transformations in the pharmaceutical sector, discuss their implications or engage with innovative solutions to challenges of equitable access. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Industrial innovation and pharmaceutical pricing
- Health technology assessment and drug coverage decisions
- Clinical treatment practices and rationing dilemmas
- Patients’ engagement in knowledge production and the mobilization of patient communities

Key words:

medical innovation, precision medicine, pharmaceuticals