

## Editorial ENHE

### 1 “Material Care Studies”

The history of nursing is a research area that has been evolving into a specialised academic field in the past 30 years. Ethics of care is also recognised as an independent field within ethics. Yet, in the past, historical and ethical issues have not been considered together. Ethical discussions are usually embedded in a philosophical framework of argumentation. Yet, ethical questions also have a history and many historical issues are based within a long tradition of ethical reflection. Furthermore, changes of the social context influence how (and which) questions are raised. Such links between history and ethics are often ignored and even in historical papers ethical dimensions are often only implied rather than explicitly addressed. This observation of mutual barriers of reception is a crucial motivation for founding a new journal.

The Open Access eJournal will create a dialogue between the history and the ethics of nursing while providing new impulses for advancing the subfields of the history as well as the ethics of nursing. The project accounts for the growing area of research in both the history and the ethics of nursing and provides researchers in European history of nursing with a new venue for publication. The journal is open to researchers in history, history of medicine and history of science, cultural and social studies, health and nursing studies and also philosophy and theology (and in particular ethics).

This online journal is publishing articles in English while simultaneously offering the opportunity to publish the article in the source language to reflect the linguistic pluralism in Europe. All contributions undergo a blinded anonymous peer review and appear free of charge in Open Access.

In its first issue the European Journal for Nursing History and Ethics focuses on a young and innovative field of nursing research: research on the objects of nursing, for which Lucia Artner and Isabel Atzl coined the term “Material Care Studies” in their leading article in this issue.

The “Practice Turn” in recent years<sup>1</sup> has shifted the focus not only towards the practices of nursing but also its objects. The researchers investigate not only the function, materiality and production of these objects, they also attribute an independent activity to the objects and subsequently an influence on daily nursing activities and situations.<sup>2</sup> The form, function and materiality of objects can also open up new perspectives towards nursing practices with their tasks and routines and the objects thus transform into significant historical sources.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, dealing with and using objects in nursing always also implies an ethical dimension in the relationship between nurse and patient: One might think of handling modesty and disgust when using instruments for emptying a patient’s bowels<sup>4</sup> or of the implementation and daily management of a feeding tube for artificial feeding. The feeding tube is associated with the blame of stretching out an unbearable life. Yet, it can provide

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<sup>1</sup> Reckwitz 2000, pp. 282–301.

<sup>2</sup> Manz 2015; Artner et al. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Sandelowski 2000; Atzl 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Artner/Atzl 2016.

severely ill patients time and a scope for action, as Jeanette Polls illustrates in this edition. In the field of nursing in psychiatry certain objects can imply repression and the restriction of personal freedom. Martina Wernli examines, in her article "Collection of Keys," the assortment of 90 keys that patients had copied, collected by the Swiss psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler. The copy of the key refers to the power of the keyholder that the nurses represent and simultaneously questions that power. Geertje Boschma addresses the ambivalent effect of the electric shock apparatus that promised an effective therapy but was also used as a disciplinary tool against psychiatric patients. Yet, objects can also mark (fluctuating) borders between the health professions, as Christine Hallett and Karen Nolte illustrate with a transnational comparison of how anaesthesia was administered.

In the section with open topics, Susanne Kreutzer in her conception piece develops perspectives for a European history of nursing that addresses the pluralisms, differences and mutual exchange processes within Europe but also the demarcations and numerous relationships with non-European countries. María Galiana-Sánchez investigates the influence of international organisation on the professionalization of public health nursing in Spain and she discusses the effect of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime.

## 2 References

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