

HESAV-SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

PUBLIC POLICIES, LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND HEALTH

Multidisciplinary research, serving the health care field



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Public policies, legal frameworks and health

Political decisions, legal frameworks and public policy choices have an impact on the health of populations, particularly in terms of access to the health care system, of working conditions and social inequalities in terms of health and of resources available to individuals. It is therefore essential to conduct investigations analysing the link between the socio-political context and health.

In this area, HESAV research projects focus on the impact on health of public policies, and of the provision of health care by existing services. Various current issues are addressed, such as the way in which organ donation has been framed as a public health care challenge that feeds current debates on the shortage of organ donors in Switzerland. One project looks at the consequences of new policies concerning back-to-work programmes and disability insurance provisions on beneficiaries of services; another looks at the effects on care practices and on the experience of psychiatric patients brought about by involuntary institutionalisation. Finally, the research also raises questions about the links between the political and legislative environment and issues such as the quality of screening programmes using mammograms, or of measures for radiation protection.

Health in the workplace is also a major challenge. Among other issues, we are studying means to promote breastfeeding in the workplace, as well as prevention measures and practices aiming to reduce professional risks in the context of the protection of pregnant workers.

Finally, legal research projects are tackling the question of financial compensation for informal caregivers, as well as the issue of health insurance coverage for specific health care interventions these caregivers provide.

Current research

**Knowledge and power.
The practices of forensic
psychiatrists relating to
compulsory social measures.
A comparative study of the
cantons of Vaud, Geneva
and Valais (1940-the pres-
ent).**

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With support from SNSF,
Division PNR 76



This project is part of the 'Assistance and coercion: past, present and future' National Research Programme (NRP 76). This NRP's main objective is to analyse the characteristics and effects of social measures that undermine or protect the integrity of individuals. As one of about twenty projects selected by the Swiss National Science Foundation, our study aims to investigate the place of psychiatrists' forensic reports in decision-making processes. A forensic report is a required document when appointing a legal guardian or interning someone in a psychiatric institution ('compulsory social measures'). It decides on aspects such as responsibility, the potential danger to self or others and the need for care. What knowledge does a forensic report produce and what treatments and institutions (hospitals, homes, different sorts of prison) does it recommend? How does the psychiatrist describe the conduct that justifies restricting someone's freedom for their own safety or the safety of others? How do those who have been the subject of a report react to the decisions imposed on them?

To answer these questions while considering historical and geographical variations, the study covers a long period (1940-the present) and compares three French-speaking cantons (Vaud, Geneva and Valais). From a methodological point of view, in addition to studying institutional archives and various other sources, we will do a quantitative analysis of 600 forensic reports and a qualitative analysis of a smaller corpus of cases having incurred both civil and criminal measures.

Our broad hypothesis is that the practices of forensic reports reflect and influence socio-political responses to transgressive behaviours. It remains to be ascertained whether the evolution of these reports represents social progress in helping those affected by compulsory social measures.

Pedagogising elder care.
Sociology of continuous
training as means to humanize
care homes.

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Medicalised care homes are often talked about with criticism, and demands for their improvement have been constant. A re-professionalisation of elder care workers through continuous training has imposed itself through a political and social consensus as one of the means to ensure such improvements.

Training institutes that provide training courses, and therefore partly implement this reform, insert themselves in interactions between residents, employees and managers with the goal to improve the lives of the elderly. This model of a dual reform of both care homes and of professional practices brings on a change in social relations and is structured by specific knowledge circulations. Knowledge exchanges take place in a field, that of ageing, where soft skills and know-how with and about the elderly are at stake.

The present sociological research will study this area in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and the reconfigurations brought on by continuous training. The study of both the production and reception of training programs offered by two different institutes in care homes will shed light on the cultural challenges faced by the ageing of the population, where research has ordinarily aimed the sanitary and economical effects of the phenomenon.

We will study to that end:

1. On a micro level, the reconfigurations of practices and social interactions among caregivers and residents and, secondly, the innovation work and the effects of management through skills in situations observed and thirdly in grey literature.
2. On an intermediate level (meso), the elaboration of knowledge, their process of validation and legitimization, of reproduction and distribution will be studied.
3. On a macro level, attention will be brought to institutional changes and the normalisation work that will come from these changes.

These three levels of analysis will allow us to jointly seize the evolution of training today in the field of ageing in institutions, as well as more general social reforms that this evolution stems from and participates in.

Maternity protection at work: practices, obstacles, resources.

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With mixed support from
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The implementation of existing legal provisions (Federal Labour Law, Ordinance on the Protection of Maternity) aimed at protecting the health of pregnant workers or new mothers and their children contains flaws, both in the employment field and in the health care system. These flaws cannot merely be attributed to a lack of information; rather, they seem to stem from the contradictory requirements of employment and of maternity protection that lead protagonists to fail to apply some legal provisions, or to develop prevention practices that lie outside legal guidelines.

The project, conducted by a multidisciplinary team (psychologist, midwife and occupational health physician) has the goal of providing an overview of the current implementation of legal provisions for maternity protection in two employment sectors (health care and food production), as well as by gynecologists and midwives in French-speaking Switzerland. It seeks to identify the obstacles and the resources that have an impact on the implementation of these provisions, and aims at evaluating the perceptions of women workers themselves.

Data collection will be comprised of three facets:

1. Questionnaires for gynecologists, midwives and employers.
2. Case studies in 6 to 8 enterprises including interviews with women workers, human resources managers, occupational health physicians and workplace security specialists.
3. Focus groups with labour inspectors, occupational physicians and occupational hygienists.

This study will contribute to increasing knowledge and to provide concrete information on health protection practices for workers facing professional risks, as well as on work and maternity conciliation in Switzerland. Its results should promote improvements in maternity protection measures as well as in professional practices.

Hes-SO

Haute Ecole Spécialisée
de Suisse occidentale
Hochschule Westschweiz
University of Applied Sciences
Western Switzerland



The long-term role of forensic medical expertise in placements and detention: from the Enlightenment to the Swiss Civil Code, in Geneva and Vaud..

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With support from SNSF,
Division PNR 76



In civil and penal jurisdiction, forensic assessments coin decision-making with regard to the compulsory confinement of persons posing a threat to themselves or to others. Where does this power of the experts stem from and which factors contributed to the development of forensic psychiatry in Switzerland?

The period under investigation (1760–1910) saw a rise of the epistemological and social power of forensic psychiatry as well as, simultaneously, a strengthening of legal provisions guaranteeing individual freedoms and an increase in the number of institutions replacing hospitals. The project wishes to describe the emergence of novel coercion structures dealing with “deviant” behavior and “abnormal” conduct in a period of liberalism. The project will draw comparisons between the cantons of Geneva and Vaud in which control mechanisms, internments, and treatment methods were put in place precociously, based on forensic assessments.

The recent reappraisal of the history of psychiatry in Switzerland calls for the study of forensic assessments over a longer period of time. Even before cantonal and federal legislation (Swiss Civil Code, ZGB 1907, for example) declared medical expertise mandatory, therapeutic or safety internment was based on forensic assessments of which little is known and that are difficult to access in the archives. This project will highlight the history of an ambivalent practice that is reflected in the current legal situation.

The project wishes to identify the current challenges in the field of forensic psychiatry with regard to placement and internment measures. It will deal with changes to practices, sensibilities, the discourse, and those institutions responsible for forensic assessments, i.e. how they are structured and how they assert themselves. Thanks to the historical reappraisal of the impact of forensic assessments on society, this project will serve today's experts as a basis for the critical reflection of current legal and administrative procedures.

Forensic assessments aim at objectivizing the mental state of health in order to serve as a basis for legal and administrative decisions. However, experts intervene within a context that is constantly evolving. Thanks to the analysis of a larger time frame, this study will suggest a new understanding for the different factors that change the normative role of forensic assessments with regard to internment practices. A better understanding of the changes that took place will prove to be advantageous for the analysis of current policies and the preparation of future policies..

Current PhD research

Health policies on preventing the transmission of Chagas parasite in Switzerland and experiences of migrant pregnant women from Latin America.

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Health policies on preventing Chagas transmission during pregnancy in non-endemic countries are usually poorly developed. In Switzerland, although the population is protected from parasite transmission by blood transfusion surveillance and organ donation measures, medical control of Chagas parasite transmission during pregnancy is only practiced in Geneva and Lausanne.

Thus, the absence of a national screening policy for Chagas disease during pregnancy raises the issues of how public health priorities are elaborated.

Furthermore, little is known about the experiences of pregnant women who are screened and monitored for a Chagas disease. In a context of migration, health can be a topic in competition with other concerns (financial, housing ...), moreover, the diagnosis of Chagas can be experienced as a factor of stigma and discrimination. Finally, this silent infection present an uncertain evolution towards a disease and treatments are not very effective at the chronic stage. Pregnant women could face a dilemma between being screened for the benefit of their children's health and not wanting to know their own parasitological status.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Latin American migrants and Healthcare providers, I examine two questions:

1. What are the socio-political determinants that influences the policy around the prevention of Chagas parasite transmission in Switzerland ?
2. How women experiences the screening and monitoring of the Chagas disease in a context of maternity ?

The aim of this research is to observe how a migrant population perceives its disease and the health system in order to highlight the obstacles and factors influencing the care process and to adapt the professional practice according to the needs expressed or identified. This thesis will also lead to a societal reflection on issues of prevention policies and their impact on migrant populations in general, as well as on innovations and social processes that lead to their uses or their rejections.

Maternity protection at work: practices, obstacles, resources.

ALESSIA ZELLWEGER

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This thesis is part of an interdisciplinary project on maternity protection at work.

Ground findings' clearly indicate that the implementation of existing legal provisions (Federal Labour Law, Ordinance on the Protection of Maternity) aimed at protecting the health of pregnant workers or new mothers and their children contains flaws, both in the employment field and in the health care system.

The project, in which this thesis is inscribed, is conducted by a multidisciplinary team (psychologist, midwife and occupational health physician) in collaboration with the Institute for Work and Health (IST). This study aims to provide an overview of the current implementation of legal provisions for maternity protection in two employment sectors (health care and food production), as well as by gynecologists and midwives in French-speaking Switzerland. It seeks to identify the obstacles and the resources that have an impact on the implementation of these provisions, to evaluate their adequacy with workers' needs and the perceptions of women workers themselves upon these policies.

Data collection will be comprised of two facets:

1. Questionnaires for gynecologists, midwives and employers.
2. Case studies in 6 to 8 enterprises including interviews with women workers, human resources managers, occupational health physicians and workplace security specialists.

In a knowledge enhancement's perspective, the present thesis will be able to provide insights on current health protection practices for workers facing professional risks, as well as on work and maternity conciliation in Switzerland.

Completed research

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Delphine Moreau (HESAV)

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Noemi Dissler (HESAV)

Bettina Blatter (HESAV)

End 2019

Protection by confinement: sociological and historical perspectives on inpatient civil commitment.

Raphaël Hammer

In collaboration with

Vincent Barras (IUHMSP)

Manuel Pascual (CHUV)

François Kaech (HESAV)

Alexia Cochand (HESAV)

End 2016

Historical and sociological perspectives on the construction of organ donation as a public problem in Switzerland.

Raphaël Hammer

In collaboration with

Yvonne Meyer (HESAV)

Sophie Inglis (HESAV)

Stéphanie Pfister (HESAV)

Céline Schnegg (HESAV)

End 2015

Risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy: couples' management and professional issues.

Completed research in collaboration

Brenda Spencer (UNIL, CHUV)

In collaboration with

Lucia Floris (HESAV)

Brigitta Danuser (IURST)

Marianne Modak (HETS)

End 2017

Health promotion in the workplace: what is the place of breastfeeding?

Jean-Pierre Tabin (EESP)

In collaboration with

Isabelle Probst (HESAV)

End 2017

Living under the new paradigm of the Swiss disability insurance.

Completed PhD research

Céline Schnegg

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How to make tangible the fetal risk of alcohol use? A sociological analysis of truth tests within concerned arenas, from science to public health and clinical practice

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All research can be found on the website of HESAV

<http://recherche.hesav.ch>



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