

AGEM – A German Association of Medical Anthropology

Legally registered non profit organization in Hamburg (founded in 1970) – www.agem-ethnomedizin.de – Publisher of *Curare*. Zeitschrift für Medizinethnologie ▪ ISSN 0344 - 8622 ▪ *Curare*. Journal of Medical Anthropology

AGEM – Mission statement

The German association AGEM (“Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin” = Working group “Ethnomedizin”/Medical Anthropology) is a community of scholars and practitioners engaged in studying and understanding the relationships among human beings and their diverse cultures, beliefs, and medical practices. AGEM facilitates scholarly collaboration and research, and disseminates research findings through regular conferences and the affiliated journal *Curare*, Journal of Medical Anthropology and Transcultural Psychiatry (since 2008 new subtitle: *Curare, Journal of Medical Anthropology*). AGEM members come from a variety of disciplines, such as medicine (including medical history), pharmacology, human biology and human ethology, botany and related natural sciences, as well as human ecology, cultural and social anthropology, sociology, philology, psychology, and folklore.

It is the primary interest of AGEM to understand, examine, compare, and disseminate the medical beliefs and practices of people from different cultural backgrounds and histories. The Board of Directors invites all scholars and practitioners interested in the critical investigation and applied work of the relationships of cultures, geographies and medicine to join our organization.

The scope of interest of our member community is vast. Since its inception in 1970, AGEM members have researched the links between medicine and culture focusing on the medical practices of rural and indigenous peoples, urban population, and other people in industrialized nations in all parts of the world (Europe, Latin America, North America, Africa, Australia, and Asia). More recently our interests include the critical inquiry of local-global processes that influence past and present traditional medical practices as well as past and present biomedical practices (i.e. Western medicine, orthodox medicine).

We view the interdisciplinary field of medical anthropology and ethnology as the foundation of our scientific analysis and applied work at the nexus of culture and medicine. We advocate the uses of ethnography and ethnology for the study and comparison of medical beliefs and practices. It is our goal to analyze cross-culturally the changing concepts of health, illness and healing in a globalized world shaped by shifting borders as well as increasing migration and urbanization. We grant particular interest to comparative analyses of traditional healers, lay healing practitioners, and medical specialists trained in the biomedical field. The methods of medical anthropology and ethnology enable us

to examine and compare different methods of healing from an intra-, and transcultural perspective. Studies in medical anthropology have demonstrated that illness, health, and disease are cultural constructs and change depending on the particular historical moment and political, economic, social, and cultural context. Following this lead, we seek every opportunity to bring forward the critical investigation of medical beliefs in practices, medical theory, so as to provide new impetus for collaboration and development across medical and cultural systems. The latter seems of particular importance as the world is rapidly changing through increased global linkages and changing cultural and medical boundaries.

The AGEM was founded in 1970 as a membership organization. It has since grown through membership fees and donations. Since its foundation, the AGEM has made it one of its major goals to promote the publication of the professional peer-reviewed journal *Curare* publishing articles in English and in German. The actual membership fee is 80 Euros for professional members and includes the subscription to our journal *Curare*. In addition, the AGEM serves as a resource to several German and international societies, universities and professional societies through regular newsletters, annually conferences, information-dissemination through its electronic listserv, and more. Finally, the long history of the AGEM as a professional society has allowed it to accumulate a significant database of literature on the different fields of medical anthropology and transcultural psychiatry.

To join and support our interest in the critical inquiry of the medical beliefs and practices in a globalized world, please go to our website:

<http://www.agem-ethnomedizin.de> or contact us directly at
info@agem-ethnomedizin.de

(Update November 2008 by Kristina Tiedje, Lyon)

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