

The First Summer School in Philosophy of Medicine in Iran: A Report

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Over the past decade, Iran has witnessed a remarkable surge in interest in philosophy of medicine, largely driven by the establishment of Philosophy of Medicine Branch in National Iranian Medical Students Olympiad (Monajemi, 2015; Monajemi et al., 2016). This annual competition, encompassing both educational and competitive components, has introduced hundreds of students to the field, fostering a lively community of students, faculties and practitioners. Simultaneously, academic institutions such as History and Philosophy of Science Faculty in Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Iranian National Museum of Medical Sciences History, Medical Ethics and History of Medicine Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences and Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University have played a crucial role in promoting interest in philosophy of medicine through the development of dedicated courses, research programs, and publication opportunities. The combined efforts of these institutions and the Olympiad have culminated in the formation of a thriving medical philosophy community in Iran (Monajemi et al., 2021). Following these developments, two years ago the “*Philosophy of Medicine Circle*” emerged as a collaborative platform uniting professors, researchers, and students from diverse academic backgrounds. Dedicated to exploring the philosophical dimensions of medical and health issues, the Circle fosters interdisciplinary dialogue and promotes innovative approaches. The Circle is non-governmental and managed by its members and is committed to advancing both educational and research initiatives within the field of medical philosophy in Iran through courses, events, lectures, ect. The website “philosophyofmedicine.com” serves as a platform showcasing the educational, research, and outreach endeavors of the Philosophy of Medicine Circle.

Members of the philosophy of medicine circle believe that far from being a subfield of the philosophy of science, the philosophy of medicine is a separate and

self-standing philosophical domain, although understanding many of its concepts and frameworks requires basic knowledge in both the philosophy of science and the philosophy of technology. Medicine consists of three primary components: clinical practice and patient care, clinical research, and biomedical sciences. Among these, clinical medicine holds a central position, as the ultimate goal of medicine is the care and treatment of patients. The other components should support and contribute to this primary goal. From this perspective, the philosophy of medicine can also be divided into three corresponding areas: the philosophy of clinical medicine, the philosophy of biomedical sciences, and the philosophy of social sciences.

The Medical Philosophy Circle successfully organized a summer school on medical philosophy in September 2023. The school offered a comprehensive overview of the field, encompassing clinical, social, and biomedical aspects of medical philosophy. In addition, this school addressed the philosophy of psychiatry, particularly the concepts of mental illness, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illness. Additional topics included philosophy of science and technology, health humanities, and the history of medicine. Basic concepts from the philosophy of science and technology were adapted to fit the context of medicine. This involved focusing on scientific observation and the scientific method in the philosophy of science, and technology literacy and sociotechnical systems in the philosophy of technology.

Table 1 depicts the content of the school.

Practical skills such as philosophical thinking, as well as research methods, were also emphasized. Renowned experts from the Philosophy of Medicine Circle, including Alireza Monajemi, Hamidreza Namazi, Gholamhossein Moghadam Heidari, Hadi Samadi, and guest lecturer Hamed Tabatabaei led the sessions. The scientific secretariat of this event was led by Alireza Monajemi and Hamid Tabatabaei.

The school held over two weekends with daily eight-hour sessions, each day was structured around 30-minute presentations followed by interactive Q&A (question and answer) sessions. The final ceremony was culminated at the Iranian National Museum of Medical Sciences History. This provided [an opportunity for participants to share their insights and engage in discussions. The school's hybrid format, combining in-person and online participation, attracted over 650 attendees in total. Seventy percent of attendees were graduates, while thirty percent were students from various fields, demonstrating a broad range of interest and experience. A notable feature of this summer school was the diverse participation of medical, dental, and other healthcare professionals alongside humanities scholars, fostering rich and insightful discussions. Figure 1 shows fields of philosophy of medicine.

One of the school's key strengths was its focus on original research. The content presented was not merely a rehash of existing literature but was based on the innovative work of the course instructors.

Table 1. The content of the First Summer School in Philosophy of Medicine

Basics	Philosophy of science	Philosophy of technology	Medical humanities, History of medicine
Philosophy of clinical medicine	Health and disease	Clinical Reasoning	Clinical Encounter, Nature of medicine
Philosophy of social medicine	Medicalization	Healthism	Biopolitics
Philosophy of biomedical sciences	Criticism of Evidence Based Medicine (EBM)	Placebo effect	Replication crisis

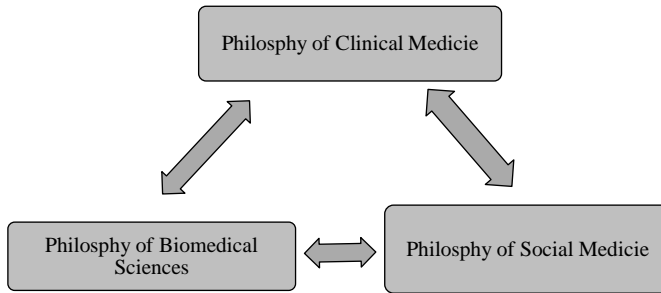


Figure 1. Fields of philosophy of medicine

This approach resonated strongly with participants, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive feedback, with over 80% rating the school highly. Beyond providing a comprehensive overview of medical philosophy and related fields, the school successfully created a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue between healthcare professionals, humanities scholars, and artists. This collaboration has significant potential to promote public health.

As mentioned above, in this school, we had a diverse group of participants, ranging from medical and dental clinicians to doctoral candidates in specialized fields within the social and human sciences, such as philosophy of science, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. While such a broad spectrum of attendees is a valuable and capable of fostering rich and deep discussions and debates, it also presented challenges for the instructors. The varying backgrounds of the participants meant that certain concepts were self-evident to some, yet complex and obscure to others. Another challenge was the introductory nature of the school topics.

The wide range of topics covered meant that some material was engaging for certain participants, while others found it less interesting. Furthermore, the constraints of an introductory course prevented us from delving into highly specialized discussions. The primary objectives were to stimulate interest and provide a foundational understanding of the topics, which will be explored in greater depth in future courses. Future medical schools should prioritize a more in-depth exploration of the three branches of medical philosophy. By delving deeper into each topic from the initial curriculum, participants can better align their studies with their interests. This approach also offers instructors a clearer framework for presenting specialized content. Ultimately, conducting multiple schools will enable a more precise evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

We anticipate that among these participants, depending on their profession and position, some will be drawn to serious research in medical philosophy, others will apply it in medical practice and patient care, others will use it in teaching students, and others will engage in popularizing and promoting it within society.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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