

From Digitalisation to Artificial Intelligence: New Scenarios for Health and Medicine

Call for Abstracts

Joint Conference AIS - Sociology of Health and Medicine Section / STS Italia

Important Dates

Deadline for abstract submission: 30 November 2025

- Notification of outcomes: 15 December 2025
- Conference: 12-13 February 2026
- Venue: Trento, Italy

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The increasing diffusion of technologies supporting diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and administrative management in healthcare is accompanied by a complex set of socio-technical expectations, which foreshadow profound transformations in clinical practice and organisational models of services, with the promise of more integrated, efficient, and sustainable socio-sanitary systems. Although expectations of transformation cyclically accompany every new 'next big thing' techno-scientifically presented as revolutionary for the world of care, those that have emerged in recent years appear qualitatively different, pervasively intertwined with social, economic, and political dynamics that amplify their potential impact. Expectations regarding the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to medicine, already present since the 1960s, now appear more concrete due to its increasing diffusion in multiple areas of social life.

The shared perception that current technological transformations are structural and not temporary can exert a drag effect, re-igniting interest in innovations that previously remained marginal. Technologies such as blockchain for data management or robotics in surgical and rehabilitative fields, which had not previously achieved full integration, could thus find new application opportunities, contributing to further dynamics of change in the healthcare sector.

The promises of change are embedded within a transforming framework. On the one hand, the adoption of AI tools moves in partial continuity with pre-existing healthcare digitalisation processes (e.g., telecare), whose adoption seems to have spread more rapidly as a consequence of the pandemic crisis. Compared to these changes, however, AI is not a simple extension of already known processes but introduces new logics and issues that require critical re-examination. On the other hand, the most recent technical innovations are called to confront a changed economic landscape (e.g., progressive reduction of public spending to support health services), ideological framework (e.g., health as an individual responsibility of patients), professional context (e.g., hyper-specialisation, liability, and professional profile enhancement), and increasingly complex policy environment (e.g., reforms of national health policies) that are the result of structural changes in society.

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The conference, jointly organised by the Italian Sociological Association (AIS – Sociology of Health and Medicine Section) and the Italian Society for Science and Technology Studies (STS Italia), aims to foster dialogue between two scientific communities that, from complementary perspectives, contribute to the critical understanding of processes intertwining health, medicine, and technological innovation. While sharing numerous theoretical and methodological affinities, the sociology of health and medicine has traditionally focused on the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of illness, care practices, and health policies, investigating themes such as inequalities, representations of health, and the role of healthcare professions and organisations. Science and Technology Studies, instead, have focused more on the analysis of co-production processes between science, technology, and society, exploring how technologies are designed, adopted, and regulated, and how they, in turn, shape social practices and institutional configurations. The complementarity between these two perspectives will enrich the collective understanding of how emerging technologies are transforming not only clinical practice but also experiences of illness and health, relationships between patients and professionals, and public policies.

In line with a strongly interdisciplinary approach, the conference is open to contributions from sociology, ethics, law, health economics, computer science, medicine, and information engineering. We invite the submission of abstracts exploring a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to:

- Infrastructuring and governance of healthcare technologies
- Health data management policies
- Health policies and emerging technologies
- Healthcare policies and regulation
- Telemedicine, digitalisation, and new challenges
- Doctor-patient relationship in the digital era
- Ethics and AI in healthcare
- Robotics in healthcare
- Technological innovation and health inequalities
- Public perceptions and social acceptance of emerging healthcare technologies
- Processes of co-construction of health, illness, and technology

Abstracts should be between 300 and 500 words in length and must be submitted by 30 November 2025 using the provided [form](#).

Participation in the conference is open to auditors only and does not require registration fees. All expenses, including meals, are the responsibility of the participants.

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Organising Committee

Alberto Ardissonne (University of Macerata), Flavia Atzori (Polytechnic University of Marche), Attila Bruni (University of Trento), Stefano Crabu (University of Padua), Marta Gibin (University of Bologna), Francesco Miele (University of Trieste), Veronica Moretti (University of Bologna), Enrico Maria Piras (Bruno Kessler Foundation), Barbara Sena (University of Bergamo)

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