

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
for the Awarding of a Conference Grant
within the framework of the conference titled
*Experiences and Perspectives of Female Patients:
Body, Health and Disease across Europe (1450–1750)***

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 30, 2026, at 12:00 PM (CET)

Introduction

The Bruno Kessler Foundation (<http://www.fbk.eu/en>, hereinafter referred to as "FBK" or the "Foundation") is a research institution that, through its 12 centers dedicated to technology, innovation, and the humanities and social sciences, aims to achieve results of excellence in scientific and technological fields.

As part of its institutional activities, the Foundation has a long-standing commitment to promoting innovation, including through the awarding of research grants and prizes. These awards—issued as grants, contributions, subsidies, or financial aid, or as economic benefits of any kind as defined under Art. 6 of Presidential Decree (D.P.R.) No. 430 of October 26, 2001—aim to stimulate research through an evaluative process centered on fairness and transparency, based on objective and accessible criteria. Furthermore, a primary objective of the Foundation is to facilitate access to selection procedures through intuitive and well-established methods. This approach allows for the clear tracking of every stage of the selection and evaluation processes, thereby maintaining a high level of confidence among participants and the public in the award assignment procedures and the selection methods adopted.

1. SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE OF THE CALL

This Call for Applications sets out the procedures for awarding a Conference Grant in connection with the conference titled ***Experiences and Perspectives of Female Patients: Body, Health and Disease across Europe (1450–1750)***. The event will be held at the **Italian-German Historical Institute (ISIG)** of the Bruno Kessler Foundation in Trento on **March 30–31, 2027**. The Foundation's Italian-German Historical Institute intends to award this Grant to researchers operating in the field of Early Modern History. The award is provided as a **partial reimbursement of travel expenses and direct coverage of meals and accommodation costs** (as further specified in Article 6 below).

The objectives of these awards/grants are:

- 1] to incentivize and promote the excellence of research conducted by meritorious researchers;
- 2] to foster and highlight exceptional research on themes that remain underexplored within the field of socio-cultural history in the early modern period, and more specifically, the social history of medicine.

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates (natural persons) interested in applying for this Call must satisfy the following requirements by the established application deadline:

- Requirement 1:
 - Scientific quality of the paper proposal that will be presented at the conference, and its relevance to the conference themes. The structure of the proposal, including an abstract of 1,500 characters, must adhere to the instructions specified in Article 4: 'Submission Procedure'.
- Requirement 2:
 - An academic curriculum vitae (maximum one page), including the five most significant publications (see Article 4: 'Submission Procedure').

The following are excluded from the selection process:

- Individuals who have not yet obtained a Master's Degree (or equivalent Laurea Magistrale).

3. SELECTION PROCEDURE

Applications will be evaluated based on specific criteria to establish a merit-based ranking and designate the winner(s). The evaluation criteria include:

- Requirement 1: Score 10
- Requirement 2: Score 10

For the evaluation of applications, a Selection Committee consisting of **three experts** will be appointed: two internal members from the Italian-German Historical Institute and one external member. The composition of the Committee shall ensure gender balance.

4. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

As stated in Article 2, the following documents must be submitted:

- a) **Proposal for the contribution**, divided into the following sections:
 - First name, last name, and institutional affiliation of the applicant
 - Provisional title (and subtitle, if any) of the contribution
 - Abstract (maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)
 - 5 keywords
 - Short biographical note (maximum 10 lines)
- b) **Academic curriculum vitae**, including a list of the five most significant publications (maximum one page).

Applications, including all required documentation, must be submitted in PDF format via email (standard or certified email) to the following e-mail address: femalepatients@fbk.eu no later than 12:00 PM (CET) on **March 30, 2026**.

For further details regarding the submission process, please refer to **ANNEX A** ('RATIONALE OF THE CONFERENCE').

5. EVALUATION PROCESS

The grants/awards shall be assigned following an assessment of the proposal as described and documented by the applicants in their Conference Grant application. The subject of the proposal must coincide with historical research on the experiences of health, illness, and healing among women in the early modern period. The conference aims to investigate women's attitudes toward their attending physicians, their perspectives on diagnoses and prescribed therapies, and, more broadly, female patients' approaches to traditional conceptualizations of the body, health, and disease. This inquiry extends across diverse socio-cultural frameworks—including hospitals and charitable institutions, municipal health boards, criminal or inquisitorial trials and forensic medicine, monastic structures, noble residences, court environments, and literary and artistic circles—and seeks to encompass female voices from the various European social strata. A comparison with the male perspective is also encouraged.

A comprehensive description of the conference themes is available in **ANNEX A** ('RATIONALE OF THE CONFERENCE'). In addition to the scientific quality of the proposal and its alignment with the conference rationale, the academic curriculum vitae will also be evaluated.

6. AWARDS AND GRANTS

A total of **9 awards** shall be assigned.

The award will be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of travel expenses, up to a maximum of **150 EUR**. Costs for lodging and meals will be covered directly by the Institute hosting the conference.

Where feasible, the Foundation reserves the right to increase the number of conference grants awarded during the same period and for the same purpose, in order to support and recognize a greater number of praiseworthy proposals.

7. NOTIFICATION OF AWARD

The results of the selection process will be communicated directly to the applicants by **May 30, 2026**. Successful candidates must confirm their acceptance or withdrawal within 7 working days following the notification of the award.

8. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

Pursuant to Art. 13 of EU Regulation No. 2016/679 (GDPR), the personal data provided will be processed for the management of this Call and the resulting ranking, for the subsequent payment of the award/grant, and for other purposes compatible with the evaluation methods specified herein. Processing will be carried out using manual, computerized, and electronic tools suitable for ensuring the security and confidentiality of the data.

Data will be processed by the Bruno Kessler Foundation — acting as the Data Controller — in compliance with Regulation (EU) No. 2016/679 (GDPR) and Legislative Decree No. 196/2003, as amended by Legislative Decree 101/2018. The point of contact for the Data Controller is the Center that issued this Call, whose e-mail is fbk.isig@fbk.eu.

The provision of data is mandatory for the evaluation of eligibility requirements; failure to provide such data will result in exclusion from the selection process.

In accordance with Chapter III of the GDPR, each applicant has the right to access, rectify, or erase their data, to request restriction of processing, to object to processing for legitimate reasons, to exercise the right to data portability, and to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Authority.

The full privacy policy regarding the processing of personal data is available at the following link: bit.ly/FBK_Informativa_Privacy_ScientificManagementSupport.

For any further clarification, please write to: femalepatients@fbk.eu

Person in charge of the procedure (Selection Phase) and Internal Person in Charge of Data Processing is Massimo Rospocher, Director of the FBK-ISIG Research Center (please see the link bit.ly/FBK_Informativa_Privacy_ScientificManagementSupport).

Trento, January 12, 2026

ANNEX A RATIONALE OF THE CONFERENCE *Experiences and Perspectives of Female Patients: Body, Health, and Disease across Europe (1450–1750)*

Object: Up to two-day international conference with a view to producing a **peer-reviewed special issue** with selected papers that will be submitted to the leading academic journal *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento / Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient*. The conference will be the concluding event of the research project titled *The*

Role of Gender in Medical Care. The Case of the Imperial Habsburg Family (16th–17th Centuries)
(Marie Skłodowska-Curie Project num. 101202043; <https://gendmedhab.fbk.eu/>).

Location and date: Italy, Italian-German Historical Institute of Trento, 30–31 March 2027.

Organizing committee: Alessandra Quaranta and Elena Taddei.

Subject fields: History of Medicine; History of the Body; Gender Studies; History of Knowledge Transfer; Social, Cultural, and Intellectual History; History of Emotions; Early Modern Europe.

Languages of the conference: English, German, and Italian.

Argument

In the last thirty years, the nexus between the social history of medicine and gender studies has often yielded studies on female healers. Inquiries into fascinating figures of female medical agents who operated in the medieval and early modern periods have illuminated their engagement in health care within the domestic context and beyond. By dealing with ill bodies, caring for sick family members, administering remedies, and washing and bandaging sores, women developed manual and technical competences, refined specialist know-how in pharmacy production, and observed the effects of *materia medica* upon the body. Recent historiography has also stressed that nursing was not an exclusively female terrain, thus recalibrating the roles of men and women in medical assistance within the household. The care of sick children was a shared responsibility between both fathers and mothers, who devoted effort, time, and emotion to sick and dying children, took turns sitting at their bedside, and comforted and kept them calm. Men were also involved in the experimentation of home-made medicines and in the compilation of domestic medical manuscripts that recorded the preparation of medicaments.

By contrast, the roles of women as patients and consumers of medical services have represented an under-researched topic thus far. While most works address this theme in general terms, neglecting a gender perspective, a few significant exceptions have been produced. These reconstruct not only pains and suffering of ill women but also their insights into the body and its mechanisms of healing. Building on this relevant but limited literature, the conference aims to amplify the spectrum of women who were confronted with everyday ailments, serious diseases, and the related therapies, interacting with a variety of (male and female) figures, both specialists and non-specialists, in relation to their health status.

The conference will be the occasion to bring to light a broader spectrum of female patients' voices. These are hard-to-reach witnesses as the principal historical documents available are male-physician centred sources. Medical treatises and the published collections of medical letters and consultations aimed at enhancing the reputation of the author as practitioner and scholar, tending to obscure, undermine, or counterfeit the opinions of patients in general, and those of women in particular. These works were thus filtered by the pen of the writing physicians and their scholarly discourse. Furthermore, the direct witnesses of female patients, which are contained in family letters or recorded in the context of forensic medicine, have to be used with caution, as the way in which women talked about their health issues depended on different factors and circumstances as well as the self-image that women intended to convey according to the relationship with their interlocutors. Female witnesses were influenced by the discrepancy of social status between the women interrogated and the judges within tribunals, the hierarchical family structure of the early modern period, and the rigid social norms related to the physical and intellectual modesty that women were expected to comply with at that time.

Through an exploration of women's experiences with and understandings of their own healthy and ill bodies, the conference endeavours to illuminate the roles of female patients within medical

visits and their ability to influence their dynamics. Specifically, it scrutinizes women's attitudes towards the attending physicians, their opinions on diagnoses and therapeutics, and their approaches to the (male) traditional conceptualisations of the body, health, and disease, as well as their emotional responses to illness, recovery, and physicians' decisions. We are especially keen to refer to a wide range of early modern players and contexts. The investigation extends to a variety of socio-cultural settings—hospitals and charity facilities, municipal health boards, criminal or inquisitorial trials, monastic contexts, noble residences, court environments, literary and artistic circles—and focuses on female voices of the diverse European social strata. A comparison with the male perspective is also encouraged.

We welcome contributions focusing on one or more of the themes outlined below (depending on the historical sources utilized) or exploring analogous subjects:

- Female patients and the medical marketplace: which medical practitioners did women turn to and for what pathologies? What criteria did they adopt in their choices? What disputes, quarrels or tensions between female patients and their healers are attested?
- Cross-gender medical visits: what were the interactions between female patients and the attending male physicians and how did their interplay influence the outcomes of medical visits? Did women agree with the diagnostic assessments and therapeutic approaches of medical specialists and how did they respond to these?
- The relationships between female and male family members in regard to health issues: what importance did men attribute to the health of their female family members and to what extent did men contribute to preserve their good health status? Did fathers, brothers, and husbands seek to prevaricate their female family members in the negotiations with the doctors or, rather, did they encourage women to interact with the attending doctors and express their opinions?
- Women facing difficult childbirths and surgical operations.
- Women's medical cultures, readings, and understandings of the female body and its pathologies, also in comparison with male medical perspectives or male non-professional standpoints.
- The networks of cultural, religious, and scientific relationships by way of which women apprehended medical notions and developed medical interpretations.
- The manner in which diseases were faced by women belonging to noble and wealthy households, ruling families, the lower classes, or religious orders: what were their emotional responses to illness and treatment? What kind of relationship did women have with their ill or enfeebled body?
- The representations and meanings of female physical or mental/spiritual illness in European literary texts, religious works, and visual arts.
- The consideration of illness in social terms: were ill women penalized or stigmatized and why? Was illness a disadvantage for women in terms of social and/or professional integration?
- The identities of women as healers and patients: relationships, potential overlapping or differences between the two roles.

- The topoi of the women's physical weakness and their consequent precarious health, as historically produced by traditional male medicine, revisited through a female perspective.

Practical details

We are now inviting proposals for **20-minute-long unpublished papers** in **English, German, or Italian** that address one or more of the themes indicated in our argument description, or similar issues, relating to European territories during the period 1450–1750.

Please send your contribution proposal, including the following details:

- name, surname, and affiliation of the author
- (provisional) title (and subtitle, if applicable) of the contribution
- abstract of the contribution (maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)
- 5 keywords
- short bio-note (maximum 10 lines)

Please add your Academic curriculum vitae, including a list of the five most significant publications (maximum one page).

Please send **one PDF-file** by **30 March 2026** to the following email address: femalepatients@fbk.eu. Our responses will be transmitted by **30 May 2026**.

Thank you for considering our invitation, and we look forward to the possibility of welcoming you to our conference.

With best regards,

Alessandra Quaranta and Elena Taddei

(aquaranta@fbk.eu; elena.taddei@uibk.ac.at)