

EINSTEIN CENTER CHRONOI

Time and Awareness of Time in Antiquity

Workshop “Kairos, Krisis, Rhythmos:
Time and Time Awareness in Ancient Medicine”

Medical Kairoi and Hourly Timekeeping: Case Studies from Galen of Pergamon

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By the Roman Imperial period, sundials and water clocks, which could tell time down to the hour, had become widespread in urban environments and were available to physicians in monumental, domestic, and portable forms. The present talk will use **case studies, drawn primarily from Galen’s writings**, to investigate the impacts of this technology on discussions of medical *kairoi*. Section I will examine passages from two texts on dietetic regimens (namely, the Hippocratic *On Regimen* and Galen’s *On Hygiene*) in order to better appreciate how Galen constructed his own stance on hourly timekeeping, and how medical engagement with clocks and hours evolved from the late Classical to the Roman period. Section II will shift from a diachronic to a relatively synchronic approach and will attempt to reconstruct from **Galen’s writings** the range of stances on hourly timekeeping displayed by his contemporaries in the second century CE. This section will help us to understand some of the roles that hourly timekeeping played in the agonistic landscape of Imperial-period medicine, and to appreciate how—even during a period when clocks were prolific—individual physicians still made different choices about if, when, and how to use hours when describing medical *kairoi*.