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Zentrum Psychosoziale Medizin
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Call for Medical Doctoral Thesis

Focus on medical ethics/ sociology of medicine with Prof. Dr. Silke Schicktanz

Topic: The awareness of 'social egg-freezing' users to relevant medical knowledge and information

Technological advancements in reproductive medicine have introduced healthy women with the possibility to cryopreserve their oocytes in order to prolong their fertility, a procedure known as "social egg freezing" (SEF). This practice provoked ongoing bioethical debate on the social and ethical implications involved. Major concerns brought up in the debate include uncertain success rates and potential medical risks. However, little is known about the actual awareness of users themselves to such medically related uncertainties. Such questions are especially important since it has been empirically shown that lay people tend to overestimate the chances for late genetic motherhood.

The aim of the doctoral project is to shed light on the actual knowledge of German users of SEF and ethically reflect upon the findings. The first stage will include the detection of existing up-to-date medical information and knowledge on SEF, including known and estimated risks and chances. The second stage will include empirical qualitative interviews with German users of SEF. The focus will be on users' medical knowledge (about aims, risks, chances and alternatives), its role in their reproductive decision making and the informing procedure by medical specialists. The work should reflect on lays' medical knowledge in the context of SEF and its consideration in the medico-ethical discourse regarding informed consent and should develop guidelines for improving communication and information needs.

The work will be supervised by Professor Dr. Schicktanz and Dr. Nitzan Rimon-Zarfaty. The project will be linked to a Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) Individual-Fellowship (IF) research project dealing with concepts of time, timing and life/reproductive planning in the context of SEF.

The candidate should have the following prerequisites: prior knowledge and interest in ethics of medicine (proven by successful attendance of relevant courses); Interest and willingness to learn and practice the qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews and their analysis with software; willingness to work in an international team; excellent proficiency in German and very good knowledge of English for the evaluation of the international literature and willingness to take at least one semester (see also general conditions for doctoral studies in medical ethics <http://www.egmed.uni-goettingen.de/index.php?id=126>). It is desirable that the work will started by spring 2018.

Written applications, summarized in a PDF document, should be submitted no later than: 15.1.2018, to nitzan.rimon-zarfaty@medizin.uni-goettingen.de. The application should contain a letter of motivation, a curriculum vitae and an overview of past achievements and relevant courses.