



# ExpertTurn



## **Intimate States:**

### **New Histories of Medicine, Welfare, and Care under Socialism**

Health, social welfare, and the organization of family and social life have been central concerns for historians of socialist states. This conference invites a fresh perspective, examining how intimacy—as both concept and practice—offers new insights into how socialist institutions fostered, reimagined, or contained bonds between parents and children, patients and practitioners, and citizens and the state itself.

How might foregrounding intimacy reshape our understanding of health, medicine, and welfare in Europe under state socialism? We particularly welcome work that explores the role of expertise and caregiving practices within diverse institutional spaces. We are interested in a breadth of state socialist institutions, spanning hospitals and clinics, nurseries and retirement homes, asylums and sanatoria, maternity wards and childcare centers, among many others. By centering intimacy in institutional settings, this conference seeks to generate new histories of medicine, society, and the everyday that reveal socialism's distinctive social worlds.

We particularly welcome work that explores the role of professional expertise, the labor of care and emotional work, and the organization of diverse institutional spaces as sites where intimacy was generated or refashioned. From official complaints and personal diaries to documentary films and family scrapbooks, we invite the creative use of diverse historical sources that take us behind institutional walls and reveal the varied landscape of state spaces.

- How did intimacy or impersonality within socialist medical or welfare institutions transform definitions of health, normality, and pathology?
- What tensions emerged between professional expertise and intimate care, and how did people working and living within socialist institutions navigate these competing logics?
- In what ways did intimacy become a site of resistance, negotiation, or redefinition of socialist medical and welfare policies and practices?
- How did everyday encounters between practitioners and patients generate new forms of knowledge within socialist clinical and welfare practices?
- How did different notions of intimacy emerge from cross-disciplinary exchanges of knowledge between fields such as psychiatry, psychology, pediatrics, social work, and geriatrics?
- How did the transnational flow of medical and welfare knowledge—across socialist borders and beyond—shape understandings of intimacy?

Conference organizers: Dr. Alexander Langstaff (New York University) and Dr. Kateřina Lišková ([ExpertTurn](#) at the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Please send a 500-word abstract and a short bio to:

[intimatestates2026@gmail.com](mailto:intimatestates2026@gmail.com) **by 15 November 2025.**

Our conference will take place in Prague on 28-29 May, 2026.