

Sofie Schiødt

Between Medicine and Embalming: Delineating the Role of the Ancient Egyptian Healer

In this talk, I wish to explore the boundaries of the ancient Egyptian medical practice by scrutinizing it in relation to the closely connected practice of embalming. I will attempt to define more precisely where and how the role of the healer and that of the embalmer overlap and how they differ in order to better delineate the healer's responsibilities.

The genre of embalming manuals is very poorly documented, with only three such texts surviving. But a diachronic synthesis of the material allows for a comparison with the medical corpus, which may reveal commonalities and differences across the genres—in terms of specialized terminology, general vocabulary, grammar, text formatting—and help determine how closely linked the genres are. Moreover, a comparison of the content of the corpora may help identify overlaps of specialists, equipment, methods, theories, and/or textual sources connected to the practices. Altogether, the findings will indicate the extent of the connection between medicine and embalming, how and at which points they intersect and where they differ, which will serve to better define the role of the Egyptian medical practitioner.