

PROGRAM IN THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE SEMINAR SERIES

“Atoms, Lies, and Hands with Eyes: Daniel Sennert’s Reform of Early-Modern Medicine”

**Dr. Joel A. Klein, Molina Curator for the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, The
Huntington Library**

Abstract: Faced with intransigent traditionalists on the one hand and brash innovators on the other, the Wittenberg (Germany) professor of medicine Daniel Sennert (1572-1637) sought a major reform of medicine rooted in atomism, experimentation, and alchemy. This talk focuses on Sennert’s published works as well as his long-neglected correspondence to historicize the culture of chymical medicine at a major center of medical education in The Holy Roman Empire. Sennert – who was sometimes called the “German Galen” – has been remembered for his influential corpuscular theory, his careful description of scarlet fever, and his supervision of one of the first successful cesarean sections in Germany. He also offered one of the first courses on chymistry at a university and spent the majority of his career seeking a universal medicine and other alchemical drugs. Driven by his Lutheran faith and his belief in the public good, he clashed with secretive practitioners attempting to profit off the sale of clandestine remedies as well as charlatans attempting to defraud patients or physicians. Even so, his attempts to reform medicine led to a protracted controversy in which he was formally charged with blasphemy and heresy.



Bio: Dr. Klein stewards the history of medicine and pre-1800 science collections at The Huntington Library. He completed his PhD in the History and Philosophy of Science at Indiana University and has had post-doctoral positions at Columbia University and the Science History Institute. Dr. Klein studies the history of early-modern medicine and science with a focus on the intersections between medicine, chemistry, and matter theory in seventeenth-century Germany.

Tuesday, June 4th, 2019

12pm – 1pm

North Tower Conference, Room A

Lunch Will Be Provided

Sponsored by the Program in the History of Medicine.

For more information, please contact: Kirsten.Moore-Sheeley@cshs.org