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Medical genre development from manuscript to hypertext: a corpus based approach to macrostructure

Global communication includes a broad variety of medical genres dedicated to a lay-audience, which are deep rooted in the history of mankind.

This paper aims at tracing a specific medical genre back to its very roots by drawing on the results of a corpus based analysis that bridges a variety of languages as well as different media (manuscripts, printed books, pamphlets, websites etc). More precisely, the study is based on the DIALAYMED (DIAchronic corpus ofLAY-man oriented MEDical Texts) corpus, which currently consists of 1,5 million words mirroring seven time spans and six languages dealing with infectious diseases.

The main focus of the paper is placed on macrostructural development in order to illustrate the shifts that lead to modern print and hypertextual representation, but will also include multimodal aspects. The study will clearly point out that the structure of LSP genres that we deal with in our globalised world are, on the one hand, the result of an evolutionary process starting in the mid 14th century and respond, on the other hand, to paradigm changes of the respective science. Numerous examples will be given to illustrate the results and point to upcoming research.

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