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## Anthro and Medicine special issue: Biomed Tech and Health Inequalities

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By Eugene Raikhel

Anthropology and Medicine has a special theme issue out on "[Biomedical Technology and Health Inequities in the Global North and South](#)" guest edited by Sahra Gibbon and Susan Reynolds Whyte.

Here are several excerpts from the introduction:

"Biomedical technology can have far reaching effects on the body, identity, and sociality, as much recent research in sociology and anthropology has shown....

Yet as several commentators have pointed out, there is an urgent need to examine the applicability and utility of these concepts in comparative perspective, in trans-national and global arenas (Gibbon and Novas 2008; see also Ong and Collier 2004). Differential access to medical techniques and resources may have concrete and often unexpected consequences with respect to perception of and engagement with novel arenas of health care. Biomedical technology may not in fact transform identity and citizenship in all settings; other aspects of sociality, such as work, the family and community, may be far more important in people's management of their health and lives (see for instance Gammeltoft 2008). Highlighting the dangers of recent approaches to health identities and subjectivities focused exclusively on medical technologies or disease categories, Whyte points out how such studies may not only neglect political economy dimensions but 'essentialize, fragment and de-contextualize what is really only part of a life' (2009, 13).

A comparative perspective brings to the fore the variability and contingency of relations between medical technology, the body and identity and also highlights the urgent need to address and examine social inequalities and inequities in relation to biotechnology...

The contributions offered here deal with areas of biotechnology

where anthropology should be sensitive to issues of social difference, inequality and structural inequity. They fall in five domains: reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, organ transplantation, the outsourcing of clinical trials and genomic medicine....

...This special edition further develops anthropological assessment of biomedical technology and health inequities in the cultural arenas of the global North and South. It brings together seven articles that provide rich empirical material for further discussion and engagement of these themes, making ethnography ‘the test’ (Whyte 2009) for engaged and critical empirical analysis. The focus here is on both high-tech biomedical interventions and seemingly more ‘mundane’ tools or techniques across a very diverse range of cultural settings in the global North *and* South, including South and East Africa, India, Greece, Italy and Cuba. Drawing on ethnographic research, the contributors examine to what extent biotechnologies (including authoritative knowledge, health care programmes and procedures, equipment, and medicines) are incorporated and the dynamic processes through which techniques and knowledge come to make a difference (or not) for bodies, selves, subjectivities, identities and sociality. In doing so, the articles examine the substantive dimensions and the relationship between processes of transformation or resistance to biomedical interventions, issues of citizenship vis-a-vis state (or lack of state) provision of health care and the bodily or social consequences of health disparities and inequities ([Gibbon and Whyte, 2009](#)).”

And here’s the TOC:

[Technologies of hope? Motherhood, HIV and infant feeding in eastern Africa](#), Astrid Blystad and Karen Marie Moland

[Living and working in spite of antiretroviral therapies: strength in chronicity](#), Matteo Carlo Alcano

[Genomics as public health? Community genetics and the challenge of personalised medicine in Cuba](#), Sahra Gibbon

[Bionetworking: experimental stem cell therapy and patient recruitment in India](#), Prasanna Kumar Patra and Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner

[Between religious philanthropy and individualised medicine: situating inherited breast cancer risk in Greece](#), Eirini Kampriani

[Rationalisation and racialisation in the Rainbow Nation: inequalities and identity in the South African bone marrow transplant network](#), Emily Avera

[Tests for life chances: CD4 miracles and obstacles in Uganda](#),  
Lotte Meinert, Hanne O. Mogensen and Jenipher Twebaze

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