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Biomedical Conventions and Regulatory Objectivity in Social Studies of Science

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By Eugene Raikhel

The latest issue of Social Studies of Science is a special issue on "Biomedical Conventions and Regulatory Objectivity," edited by several members of the department where I'm currently based (McGill's Social Studies of Medicine)–Alberto Cambrosio, Thomas Schlich, and George Weisz, and Peter Keating of the University of Quebec at Montreal.

Here's the abstract from the introduction, along with the titles of the papers:

> "This special issue of *Social Studies of Science* centers on thetopic of regulation in medicine and, in particular, on the notionof *regulatory objectivity*, defined as a new form of objectivityin biomedicine that generates conventions and norms throughconcerted programs of action based on the use of a variety ofsystems for the collective production of evidence. The papersin the special issue suggest ways in which the notion of regulatoryobjectivity can be tested, extended, revised, or supersededby more appropriate notions. They insist on the need to examinemore closely clinical-therapeutic (and not just clinical-research)activities, and to pay more attention to the activities of regulatoryagencies such as the US Food and Drug Administration and tostandard-setting organizations. They call attention to the professionaland organizational activities surrounding the mobilization ofconventions for regulating clinical practices. Finally, theyprovide material that can help us to think about how analyticalnotions such as regulatory objectivity may or may not informinterventionist research projects," (**Cambrosio et al. 2009).**

Tiago Moreira, Carl May, and John Bond, "Regulatory Objectivity in Action: Mild Cognitive Impairment and the Collective Production of Uncertainty"

Vololona Rabeharisoa and Pascale Bourret, "Staging and Weighting

Evidence in Biomedicine: Comparing Clinical Practices in Cancer Genetics and Psychiatric Genetics"

Linda F. Hogle, "Pragmatic Objectivity and the Standardization of Engineered Tissues"

Patrick Castel "What's Behind a Guideline?: Authority, Competition and Collaboration in the French Oncology Sector"

Teun Zuiderent-Jerak, "Competition in the Wild: Reconfiguring Healthcare Markets"

Laurent Thévenot, "Postscript to the Special Issue: Governing Life by Standards: A View from Engagements"

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