



Conference Abstract

31st EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

The European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Health Care (ESMPH)
Belgrade, Serbia, 16-19 August 2017

Author: **Emilia Kaczmarek, MA, PhD Candidate**

Affiliation: Center for Bioethics & Biolaw, Institute of Philosophy, University of Warsaw,
3 Krakowskie Przedmiescie Street, 00-097 Warsaw, Poland

E-mail: emilia.kaczmarek@uw.edu.pl

Title: **Disease mongering - the case of advertising drugs for restless legs syndrome in Poland**

Abstract text: Disease mongering is sometimes described as a worrisome manifestation of the progressive medicalization of life. What is more, it undermines confidence in the objectivity and beneficence of contemporary medicine and science. Is the promotion of restless legs syndrome in Poland an example of disease mongering?

The objective of disease mongering is to increase the sale of a specific drug by promoting or even inventing new diseases. Numerous techniques can be used to achieve that goal: such as DTC (direct-to-consumer) mass advertising in case of over-the-counter drugs or social campaigns and sponsored articles in medical journals in case of reimbursed drugs. There is a lot of ways to make the public opinion believe that a certain disease is serious and widespread.

During the presentation the current state of ethical debate on disease mongering will be summarized. Theoretical and normative considerations will be based on the analysis of a case study - actual advertising campaigns of restless legs syndrome in Polish media.

There is a number of challenging questions on that matter. Is restless legs syndrome a disease? Who, why and how has been selling medicines for that indisposition? Finally, why should bioethicists care about it? The goal of the presentation is to try to answer for all of those questions.

Financial support:

This project was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, 2015/17/N/HS1/02122