

*The secret social network of a heretical physician in 16th-century Italy:*

*the case of Girolamo Donzellini (1513-1587)*

As sixteenth-century Inquisition records show, right when Italy was the torchbearer for medical research, it was experiencing the most turbulent phase in its religious history and many Italian physicians absorbed reformed and heretical doctrines. My post-doc project examines and interprets the link between heretical thought and the rise of modern medicine in sixteenth-century Italy, adopting a networked approach and using digital humanities tools. My main aim is to reveal the local, national and trans-national levels of this connection and to reconstruct the hidden network of Italian heretical physicians who developed non-conformist religious views and shaped a community of learned dissent, all over Italy and in their *religionis causa* exiles.

In this paper I am going to deal with the pilot case of my project: the experience of Girolamo Donzellini, a relevant case-study for several reasons, beginning with his extraordinary biography. Born in 1513, he was a physician of great renown, a prolific writer, and an expert intermediary in the *Respublica medicorum*, within which he established ties with both Protestant and Catholic colleagues. He was in contact with heretical physicians and humanists in the whole of Italian territory, and smuggled prohibited books into Italy for more than 30 years. Donzellini also travelled across Italy and beyond the Alps, living in Protestant countries for seven years. In Italy, he was put on trial five times by the Inquisition, and he was one of the few physicians to be sentenced to death (1587). His turbulent existence can be reconstructed thanks to a wide range of different sources. The minutes of his trials and his correspondence, along with the medical and philosophical books he published allow us to depict the experience of a dissident physician in great detail. More important still, these sources show the existence of a great number of other dissident physicians, interested in both the renewal of science and religion and at whose centre Donzellini acted as an intermediary.

Reconstructing this network is a crucial step forward in the investigation into the relationship between heresy and early modern medicine. Through a digital and accessible dress, I will visualise Donzellini's heretical ties (both medical and not medical), his cultural/professional connections (both Catholic and Protestant), the course of his travels and their influence on his profile as a heretical doctor. This will enhance our understanding of the part played by physicians in the so called Italian Reformation.