

Abstract

Title: In the sign of cancer. A historical and sociological study of the societal conditions for cancer research in Sweden and USA during the 20th century

Written in Swedish, summary in English

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ISBN 91-974106-2-4

ISSN 1650-4313

This dissertation consists of a study of the development of cancer research funding organisations in Sweden and USA during the 20th century. Based on sociological theories how certain conditions in society become viewed as serious social problems it analyses the development of different kinds of research funding organisations, the actors behind them and their influence on different lines of cancer research. A central aim for the study is to answer the question why a governmental organisation has the main responsibility for cancer research funding in USA while a non-governmental organisation has the same responsibility in Sweden. Given the political cultures in these two countries, it might be expected to be the other way around. The study can be characterised as a discourse analysis utilising mainly written sources. Concerning the development in USA secondary sources have been used. For the Swedish development annual reports from research funding organisations, parliamentary records and investigations, articles in the mass media and scientific/professional journals have been the main sources. In the dissertation it is argued that different groups of actors have viewed the cancer problem in different ways demanding different strategies to solve it. In the beginning of the century a coalition of scientists, physicians and philanthropists emerged in Sweden, viewing cancer as a therapeutical problem to be solved through the development of radium and X-ray treatments. In the middle of the century the state, both in Sweden and USA, became central actors in science funding and policy, with a strong belief that basic research would yield utilities for society. Here it is argued that a social contract between the state and the scientific community was established giving the latter a considerable autonomy over the scientific agenda. In this period the federal National Cancer Institute and the Swedish Cancer Fund emerged. These were organisations characterised by the internal norms of science in their policy. In this period huge amounts of money were channeled to the more basic disciplines in cancer research such as tumor biology, immunology, genetics etc. During the last half of the century we have witnessed other views of the cancer problem. In the 60s and the 70s the connection between environmental factors and cancer was focused giving rise to new funding agencies. In the last decade the perspectives of cancer patients have been more apparent especially in USA with patient movements successfully lobbying for their priorities in cancer research. As for the question of why the cancer funding structures in USA and Sweden seems paradoxical it is argued that in USA, the political culture of lobbyism have permitted actors outside the social contract between the state and the scientific community, to penetrate it and have their own priorities put on the agenda. By this lobbying such actors have forced the federal state to take the main responsibility for cancer research. This has not been the case in Sweden where the corporatist political culture have been dominant and have prevented attempts from outside actors to establish cancer as a major social and political problem.

Keywords: sociology of science, science policy, history of cancer research funding organisations