

Lorenzo Beltrame:

The bio-objectification of UCB through biobanks: regulatory challenges.

My research is focused on the social issues related to the process of umbilical cord blood (UCB) banking. UCB is indeed a rich source of stem cells capable of restoring hematopoiesis (the process with which an organism produces blood cells) and it is currently used for transplant in case of immunological and haematological diseases. In order to be available for clinical uses, UCB should be collected, processed and stored in biobanks. In the first phase of my research I studied the process of UCB bio-objectification, that is the techno-scientific set of practices and procedures that enable the transformation of UCB from a waste material into a valuable source of stem cells. The second phase was devoted to the study of the economic and social implications of the two main regimes of UCB biobanking (public vs. private). In this third phase I'm exploring some issues of regulation in this field of medical biotechnology. In this workshop I will present some tensions between the claims of practitioners, medical-professional and bioethical bodies and regulatory devices enacted by the European Community and some national governments related to the issue of public vs. private biobanking.