

News, Notes, and Queries

Medical Archives and Manuscripts News, 2002

Last year we referred in these pages to *Research Resources in Medical History*, the new funding initiative of the Wellcome Trust to improve access to medical historical primary resources in the UK: RRMH issued its first annual report, for 2001, earlier this year (www.bl.uk/concord/medical-annualreport2001.html) showing that of 27 full applications for funding received 18 were successful, totalling £624,782. These however represented only the tip of the iceberg, as some 127 preliminary applications had been forthcoming, seeking a total of £5.5 million from a notional first year budget of £0.5 million, very few of which had been clearly outside the funding criteria. There is evidently then a large demand for support for preservation and cataloguing in the field that remains unsatisfied, and it is good to report that the Wellcome Trust is building on an initiative of such proven value, with the provision of an additional £1 million over two years (2003–4).

Awards made in 2001 to institutions in England ranged from a modest £2780 for Dartford Library's mental health archives preservation project to a hefty £64,000 for John Rylands Library's ambitious proposal to provide on-line catalogue access to the Manchester Medical Collection via a dedicated website, which will also house a database of Manchester doctors, and scanned images and virtual exhibitions on the theme of Manchester medicine. Dundee University Archives, recipients of a £96,543 award, intend to go one stage further and create digital copies of documents as part of their project to unlock the medical historical riches in their care.

Also of Scottish interest, a project that came to fruition in 2002 was Lothian Health Services Archive's *Finding the right clinical notes: on-line resources for personal health records in Scotland 1600–1994*

(www.clinicalnotes.ac.uk). This provides a database of over 1200 entries for extant Personal Health Records (PHRs) in Scotland, which can be searched in various ways, together with specimen images. Patient confidentiality is scrupulously safeguarded. The importance of clinical records for medical historical research, and their vulnerability to loss, makes this successful initiative particularly welcome; inclusion in the database does not guarantee the records a future (many are still held by the NHS) but it must help to convince health administrators that clinical material can have historical value.

The long-term future of two English medieval medical manuscripts was secured in 2002: in January a physician's girdle book or *Vade Mecum* of c. 1390, signed by James II of Scotland, was allocated under the terms of the Acceptance in Lieu of Tax scheme to the National Library of Scotland, where it had been on loan. This form of medieval physician's manual, a folded calendar with astrological aids for prognosis and treatment, designed to hang from a belt at the waist for ready reference, must once have been ubiquitous as it became as symbolic of the medieval medical practitioner as the urine flask. Several survive, although this seems to be the only one with known Scottish connections. Later in the year the Wellcome Library purchased an English medical compendium of c. 1464, again through the agency of government intervention, when the export of the manuscript overseas by the owner was blocked by the Department of Culture. This compendium is a lavishly illustrated collection of calendrical and astronomical tables, medical texts, and other non-medical components, including a pilgrimage guide, probably originating from the Lincolnshire area. The Wellcome Trust, with the support of the Science Museum's Prism fund, was

able to meet the purchase price negotiated with DCMS by the owner, and thus ensure that public access to this evocative manuscript is secure for the future.

The annual digest of health and medicine-related accessions to archive repositories for 2001, published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, reveals an interesting range of material (www.hmc.gov.uk/accessions/2001). It is not easy to gain much sense of the size or complexity of accessions from the bald details outlined in the digest, but it is clear that, as always, twentieth-century hospital records predominate, and to be assumed that the accessions are often very bulky. The heavy demands that maintenance of hospital records places on the local authority archives network is demonstrated by the number of applications to RRMH from this source. Among the more noteworthy accessions in this area we would mention records of the Royal Eastern Counties Institution for the Mentally Defective, Colchester, 1859–2001 (Essex Record Office, Colchester and North-East Essex Branch), and patients' case books, pamphlets and papers, of the Retreat, York, including writings by patients, nineteenth to twentieth century (Borthwick Institute). There are occasional oddities: Cheshire Archives acquired a patients' register of Parkside Hospital, Macclesfield, 1883–91, in the same year as Tameside Archive Service accessioned a register of patients under restraint, patients under medical treatment and deaths and injuries, 1886–1925, from the same institution. Still, better that documents are secured and made available, albeit in different repositories, than that they are acquired by no one.

Among non-institutional accessions this

writer's attention was drawn to letters to Richard Bright, *c.* 1850–58 (Edinburgh University Library), letters of Dr William Wilson, medical missionary in China, nineteenth century (Cumbria Record Office, Kendal), and papers of the medical writer Walter Lynne, 1712–14, among the Lynne of Southwick family archive (Northamptonshire Record Office). Other simple entries do their best to disguise the import of the affairs to which the records bear witness: the minute books of the Hull Board of Health, 1831–33, acquired by Hull City Archives, no doubt record the urgent preparations of the town's worthies to combat the approach of cholera; Hull, as a seaport, would have been in the front line. And what tales lie behind the dry figures recorded in the South Suffolk midwives' account book, 1833–83 (Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch)? The riches of Britain's local record offices have hardly been touched by serious historians, and lists like the HMC's accessions to repositories reminds us of what they are missing.

An acquisition that did not arrive in time to make the 2001 list was the purchase by the Wellcome Library, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, of the papers of the Nobel prize-winner Francis Crick. Crick's papers looked set to enter the collection of a well-known Californian scientific manuscripts dealer until representations from the Wellcome Trust persuaded Crick to turn his eyes towards his home country. At the time of writing, cataloguing of the first tranche of his papers, which deal largely with genetics and DNA research, is underway. Crick's later papers, mainly dealing with his neurological interests, are expected soon.

Medical History, Supplement No. 22

The publication of *Walking the Paris hospitals: diary of an Edinburgh medical student, 1834–1835* has been postponed until the end of 2003. Supplement No. 22, to be published in May 2003, will be *Sambrook*

Court: the letters of J C Lettsom at the Medical Society of London, edited by Christopher Lawrence, Fiona Macdonald, and Christopher C Booth.

Jerry Stannard Memorial Ward

The 2003 competition for the annual award in honour of the late Professor Jerry Stannard is open to graduate students and to recent recipients of a doctoral degree (the PhD degree or an equivalent), conferred not more than five years before the competition deadline. The purpose of the award is to encourage research by young scholars in the pre-1700s history of materia medica, medicinal botany, pharmacy, folklore of drug therapy, and the bibliography of these areas. Manuscripts must be in English, French or German. Only one paper by any author may be submitted in any given year. Each entry should be typewritten, double-spaced, and no longer than 50 pages, including notes, bibliography, and appendices. Entrants should keep copies of their manuscripts, since manuscripts submitted will not be

returned. Each manuscript must be accompanied by: (a) a one-page abstract of the paper in English; (b) a current curriculum vitae of the author; and (c) a letter of recommendation from an established scholar in the field. Entrants who are resident in the USA are also requested to indicate their home address and social security number. Entries must be received no later than 15 February 2003. The award of \$1000 will be announced on or about 15 May 2003. All manuscripts and correspondence should be addressed to: The Stannard Award Committee, Attn. Professor Victor Bailey, Department of History, University of Kansas, Wescoe Hall, 1445 Jayhawk Blvd. Room 3001, Lawrence, KS 66045-7590, USA.

Call for Papers

**Second Congress of Russia Confederation of Medical Historians (KIM)
Moscow, 14–17 May 2003**

The Second Congress of KIM will take place at the Sechenov Medical Academy in Moscow, Russia, 14–17 May 2003. The main topics will be: summing up twentieth-century biomedicine; lessons of socialist medicine and healthcare; medical museums; old and new theories of medicine; the history of medicine as a teaching subject; the history of military medicine; and the history of medical ethics. The working

languages are Russian and English. Translation will be available. Those wishing to participate should submit an abstract (**500 words maximum**) on hard copy and on diskette in Russian or English **before 1 January 2003**, to: Dr Tatjana Zhuravleva, Secretary General of KIM, NPO "Meditsynskaya Encyclopedia", Petroverigsky per. 6/8, Moscow 111838, Russia.

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Call for Papers

2003 Annual Meeting of Cheiron

The International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences calls for proposals for the 35th annual meeting of Cheiron, to be held 19–22 June 2003, at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire, USA. Papers, posters, symposia, or workshops on the history of the behavioral or social sciences or related historiographical and methodological issues may be submitted. The proposals should be sent as text or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents by 13 January 2003 to: Program

Chair, Homer Stavely, Psychology Department, Mailstop 3400, Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire, 03435-3400, USA; e-mail: tstavely@keene.edu; phone: (603) 358-2327; fax: (603) 358-2184. The conference Local Host is Ben Harris, Department of Psychology, UNH, Durham, NH 03824, USA; e-mail: bh5@unh.edu; phone: (603) 862-4107; fax: (603) 862-4986. Additional information is available from the Cheiron web page, <http://www.psych.yorku.ca/orgs/cheiron/>.

Call for Papers

International Conference

‘Maladie en lettres, 17–20e siècle/Krankheit in Briefen, 17./20 Jh.’

Lausanne, 26–28 June 2003

Letters from patients have become an important area of research over the last few years, particularly in French and German historiography. The aim of this conference is to bring together researchers of the two linguistic traditions—without excluding other currents in other languages—so as to compare approaches and sources. The latter will include not only correspondence between patients and doctors, but also that between laypeople on matters regarding health and illness.

The official languages of the conference will be German and French. Those wishing

to participate should send a one-page proposal with a curriculum vitae by 15 February 2003 to *both* the organizers as follows: Vincent Barras, Institut Universitaire romand d’histoire de la médecine et de la santé, 1, chemin des Falaises, CH-1005 Lausanne, Switzerland; tel: 00 41 21 314 70 50; fax: 00 41 21 314 70 55; e-mail: histmed@inst.hospvd.ch. Martin Dinges, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung, Straussweg 17, D-70184 Stuttgart, Germany; tel: 00 39 711 46084 167; fax: 00 39 711 46084 181; e-mail: martin.dinges@igm.bosch.de.