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History of Medicine Schedule and Abstracts 2009-2010

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HISTORY OF MEDICINE SCHEDULE 2009-2010 (www.hhom.org)

Ist Wednesday of each month
Onstead Auditorium
MD Anderson Hospital (except Nov. 4)

2009

September 2 – Celebrating Darwin’s 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of “On the Origin of Species.”

David Wheeler, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine.

“From Genes to Genome: An historical perspective.”

In the middle of the 19th century the problem of how inheritance occurred was a complete mystery. Where there is mystery, the image of God glows brightly in people's imagination. For millenia humans have been interested, inspired, and awestruck by the way traits are inherited. By the time Darwin and Mendel came on the scene, crops had been domesticated for 10,000 years, barn-yard or pasture animals for 6,000 years, and it had not escaped our ancestor's attention that by carefully controlling the mating of plants and animals, and careful selection among the progeny one could adapt these organisms to the great benefit the individual and community. Therefore in Mendel and Darwin's day, horticulture and animal husbandry were thriving industries as they are today, and the effort to optimize the principles of selection was under intense scrutiny by amateur and professional scientists and "fanciers" alike. The contrast between the way Mendel viewed these activities and the way Darwin viewed them is what is most interesting and relevant to genetics and medicine today.

October 7

Ronald L. Young, M.D., Baylor College of Medicine

“Ignaz Semmelweis: Medical Prophet Without Honor”

Semmelweis was a nineteenth century Austro-Hungarian physician who early in his career became involved with the problem of mortality from puerperal fever and ultimately worked out the details of its preventive measures. He ran into tremendous opposition in his efforts mainly due to the reluctance of established physicians to accept the responsibility for the problem that he had placed upon their shoulders. He was also impeded in part by the political turmoil of mid-nineteenth century Europe and the conflict arising out of Hungary’s desire for independence. Semmelweis most certainly mismanaged his ideas to a great degree and, in the process, mismanaged his career. The consequences of this was disastrous for thousands of women in labor whose pregnancies ended in tragedy. Some others of similar persuasions (Holmes in America, for example) had similar difficulties in their own careers. Nevertheless, he is today recognized as one of the true giants and innovators of his time and the savior of countless lives.

November 4 – Cullen Auditorium, BCM

Steven Greenberg M.D. Dean of Medicine, BCM

Stephen B. Greenberg is Professor of Medicine, Herman Brown Teaching Professor and Senior Vice President and Dean of Medical Education at Baylor College of Medicine. He has been Chief of Medicine at Ben Taub General Hospital since 1990.

**“Why Lewis Thomas, MD is Not a Bore:
The Life of a Biology Watcher”**

As a medical researcher and administrator, Dr. Lewis Thomas had a highly productive academic career. Yet through the personal – essay form, he has reached a wider public audience. These essays have been published in successful books, such as The Lives of Cells. His writings about the implications of modern science for contemporary culture made effective use of the familiar essay. He believed that the Earth’s biosphere is one large integrated whole and that symbiosis and altruism were equal to competition as driving forces behind our universe. He understood the possibilities of collaboration between the sciences and the humanities. His literary success has inspired other physicians to maintain the tradition of medical humanism in our highly specialized age and reach a wider audience through their writings.

December 2 - Mumford speaker on the History and Ideals of Medicine

Vivien Spitz, author of

“Doctors from Hell: The Horrific Account of Nazi Experiments on Humans.”

Vivien Spitz was a twenty two year old court reporter at the post World War II “Doctors Trial” at Nuremberg, Germany where she directly confronted and recorded the testimony and evidence of those Nazi physicians who were on trial for war crimes. In these days of Holocaust denial, her outstanding firsthand account will clear the record to laser sharpness. Her book is now available in multiple languages and is a must read for every citizen who has doubts about man’s ability to commit atrocities. At the same time it is a celebration of a caring citizen who has gone beyond the call to spotlight the events to prevent future occurrences.

2010

January 6

Student Essay Contest Winners

Baylor College of Medicine: **Lynn Yudofsky,**

“Illuminating Autism: Passing the Torch from the Twentieth Century”

For much of the Twentieth Century, researchers and mental health professionals believed that the dysfunctions of people with autism stemmed from experiential factors, such as emotional neglect, parental abuse, or even from vaccinations received during childhood. Only recently have scientists posited that this illness has primary neurobiological derivations, and, possibly, hereditary concomitants. This paper examines the conceptual evolution of the etiologies of autism over the Twentieth Century and the implications thereof. Additionally, it explores how the diagnostic, scientific, societal, and political alterations of these conceptualizations over the Twentieth Century have beneficially affected the professional and societal understanding and treatment of individuals with autism.

University of Texas: **Andrew Baldwin,**

“Healing Beyond Hippocrates: The Temples of Asclepius and Public Health Care in Ancient Greece.”

In the prosperous centuries that followed the *Dark Ages*, the cult of Asclepius—the Greek god of medicine—evolved from humble origins into one of the most widespread and influential forces in the ancient world. Essential to the appeal of the cult was the practice of ritual sleep, through which Asclepius was believed to provide miraculous cures to temple visitors. But the healing qualities of the temples are rarely included in the study of medicine in Classical Greece. Instead, the modern-day popularity of *Hippocratic* medicine has relegated the Asclepieion to historical obscurity, and created the impression that medical care was left entirely to the professional, secular doctor. But this perception does not accurately—or practically—reflect how the Greek healthcare system could have operated.

February 3

Heather Green Wooten, Ph.D.

“Iron Wills and Iron Lungs: The Polio Years in Texas”

From the 1930s to the 1950s, paralytic poliomyelitis (polio) threatened the lives of children and adults in the United States, arousing the same kind of fear more recently associated with AIDS and other dread diseases. Houston and Harris County, Texas, was particularly hart-hit by this debilitating illness, assuming the second-highest rate of

infection in the nation. At the time, little was known about the disease, but eventually both medical and lay responses to polio changed the medical landscape forever. This paper will explore the responses by Texas researchers to epidemic polio that led to discoveries in rehabilitative medicine, virology, and the modern intensive care unit that transformed the field nationally.

March 2&3 – McGovern Banquet and lecture

March 2 – Annual Banquet at La Colombe d'Or Restaurant

Michael Bliss, Professor of History, University of Toronto, author of “William Osler: A Life in Medicine”

“Wm Osler and the Inspirational Uses of History”

It is not politically correct to view history as inspirational or even, in most cases, as a record of progress. For William Osler, however, the history of medicine was both inspirational and a shining record of achievement. In holding these views did the great physician fall prey to naïve enthusiasms, or do we have good reason actually to celebrate the history of medicine? Supported by illustrations, and with references past and present, my talk will answer the question.

March 3 (Noon)

Michael Bliss, Professor of History, University of Toronto, Author of “Harvey Cushing: A Life in Surgery”

“Working Too Hard and Achieving Too Much: The Cost of Being Harvey Cushing”

Harvey Cushing’s achievement as the father of effective neurosurgery, almost exactly a century ago, was an epic saga in the history of medicine generally and American medicine particularly. In a heavily illustrated lecture, I will discuss the causes of Cushing’s breakthrough, stressing his extraordinary work habits, which had deep roots in the American Puritan tradition. Was it possible, though, that Cushing worked too hard and achieved too much? The cost of his achievement was paid by a generation of his offspring – both his surgical disciples, and his lonely wife and children. Particularly for his biological children he was not much of a parent at all.

April 7

Gene Boisauvin, M.D., Distinguished Teaching Professor of Medicine, University of Texas Medical School at Houston and a member of the McGovern Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit.

“Medicine in Ancient Egypt”

Although the historical and scientific gaps in studying ancient medicine are immense, we now realize that the contributions of the ancient Egyptians to the foundations of both Greek and Roman medicine and beyond, were substantial. Their skills in history-taking, observation, physical examination, clinical diagnosis and even surgery presaged developments millennia later. And although their young science was often mixed with witchcraft and mythology, it still represented a major step from superstition to an early system of science. For example, their early ‘cardiology’ included the clinical diagnosis of angina pectoris, acute myocardial infarction, arrhythmias, aortic aneurysm, the human vascular system and venous disease. Public health was emphasized through sanitation and an early sense of contagion and even infectious disease.

May 5

Jeff Unger, M.D. Associate Director of Metabolic Studies, Catalina Research Institute, Chino, California

“The History of Diabetes”

We’ve come a long way since diabetes was diagnosed by urinating on the ground and counting the number of ants marching towards the sugar laden puddle. Interestingly, the true cause of diabetes (insulin deficiency) was only determined within the past 88 years. Even more astounding is the fact that the initial injection of insulin extract was given by an occasional drunken research surgeon who simply “guessed” at how much to dose his first human charity subject! (Back then, informed consent was not required and the FDA was not overlooking any clinical trials. Besides, the patient was part of the Canadian health care system)! To everyone’s amazement the injection did reverse the patient’s diabetic ketoacidosis. However, he nearly died from sepsis due to contamination within the extract. Despite an ensuing fist fight between 2 future Noble Prize winners, the discovery of insulin remains one of the greatest medical advances in history. Learn more about how the discovery of insulin has impacted mankind in this historical review of diabetes management through the ages.