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Festivities Celebrate 225th Anniversary of Historic Medical Library

Philadelphia—Housing more than 340,000 volumes, of which 12,000 are rare books, and a staggering amount of data on medical practice of the past couple of centuries, the Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia has a lot to celebrate. The College marks the Library’s 225th anniversary with an evening reception on Thursday, December 5th, and an all-day conference on Friday, December 6th.

The reception will run from 5-7 pm, and will feature musical accompaniment and refreshments. It will also kick off a one-weekend-only exhibition of original artwork by Frank H. Netter, MD, and the launch of a juried student art exhibition.

The Friday conference will run from 9:00am-5:30pm. Entitled “Emerging Roles for Historical Medical Libraries: Value in the Digital Age,” the conference spotlights six renowned speakers from the US, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Speakers include Jacalyn Duffin, MD, PhD, FCPP; Nancy Cervetti, PhD; Simon Chaplin, PhD; Mary Fissell, PhD; Jeffrey Reznick, PhD; and closing remarks by Chris Lyons.

George M. Wohlreich, MD, FCPP, President and CEO of The College of Physicians says of the event, “We are excited to invite the public to commemorate the oldest independent medical library in the US and one of the greatest collections of historical medical materials in the world.” According to Wohlreich, there are already 150 registered guests traveling from all over the US. “Attendees will represent some of the nation’s most elite academic and cultural institutions, ranging from the Smithsonian to Harvard and Yale Universities.”

The Library has a rich and significant history, shelving over 400 books that were printed during the first fifty years of the printing press in the west. Its materials include a significant collection of personal papers from leading Philadelphia physicians, including Civil War surgeon and neurologist S. Weir Mitchell. It also holds the Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion, an encyclopedia of all that was learned about medical practice during the Civil War.
Notable photo opportunities for the event are as follows:

Reception on Thur. Dec. 5th: 6pm in Mitchell Hall - Toast led by George Wohlreich, MD, FCPP President and CEO of the College
Conference on Fri. Dec. 6th: 10am in Mitchell Hall – Welcome by Robert Hicks, PhD, Director of the Mütter Museum/Historical Medical Library; Followed at 10:15am by Jacalyn Duffin, MD, PhD, FCPP Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine at Queens University, Canada. This is also the Samuel X Radbill Lecture, Sponsored by the College’s Section on Medical History.
Conference lunch is Fri. Dec. 6th from 12:15-1:30pm for casual photos.
Wohlreich also notes, “If you can’t make the event, you might still want to check out the College’s new digital library, which launches on Dec. 5th with over 1,000 images in the history of medicine, ranging from photographs of the Philadelphia General Hospital to 15th-century German woodcuts. www.cppdigitallibrary.org”

More information about this event may be found at http://www.collegeofphysicians.org/library/library225/ or via at Library225@collegeofphysicians.org

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About The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia was founded in 1787, now the oldest professional medical organization in the country, when 24 physicians of Philadelphia gathered "to advance the science of medicine and to thereby lessen human misery." Today, more than 1,400 Fellows (elected members) continue to convene at the College and work towards better serving the public.

Throughout its 200 year history, the College has provided a place for both medical professionals and the general public to learn about medicine as both a science and as an art.

This historic spirit continues in our current mission: “advancing the cause of health while upholding the ideals and heritage of medicine.” The College strives to:

- Enable individuals, families and communities to take greater responsibility for their health.
- Improve the health of the public through service to health professionals.
- Enhance appreciation of the heritage of medicine.
- Provide information for the development of health policy.
The College is home to the Mütter Museum and the Historical Medical Library. Our outreach programs include HistoryofVaccines.org, and the Karabots Junior Fellows Program. The public is invited to attend the many lectures, workshops, and conferences the College offers. Our programs reflect our reverence for the past, our commitment to the present, and our vision for the future of medicine and health.

Additional information about The College of Physicians of Philadelphia can be found at www.collegeofphysicians.org.

**About The Mütter Museum**

America’s finest museum of medical history, the Mütter displays its beautifully preserved collections of anatomical specimens, models, and medical instruments in a 19th century “cabinet museum” setting. The museum helps the public understand the mysteries and beauty of the human body and to appreciate the history of diagnosis and treatment of disease.

The Collection began as a donation from Thomas Dent Mütter, MD, who was determined to improve and reform medical education. At the time Mütter was a student at University of Pennsylvania’s medical school, students were not allowed to work with patients or assist with medical surgical procedures. His disappointment with American teaching techniques drove him to Paris to receive hands-on training. Upon his return to the States, Mütter assembled the collection and offered it to the College with a $30,000 endowment. The donation stipulated that the College had to hire a Curator, maintain and expand the collection, fund annual lectures and erect a brick building to house the collection.

The College has held true to its promise to Dr. Mütter. Today the museum enjoys a steadily rising reputation with attendance exceeding 138,000 in FY2013. Enjoying international popularity, the museum has been featured in a recent documentary on the Discovery Channel and is the subject of two best-selling books.

The College’s Museum Education program is geared towards middle school and high school students of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and partners with area schools to expose students to the wide variety of careers in healthcare and biosciences, as well as to introduce them to the history and culture of medicine.

Features of the collection:

- Soap Lady
- Dr. Joseph Hyrtl’s human skull collection
- Plaster cast and conjoined liver of “Siamese twins” Chang & Eng
- Specimen from John Wilkes Booth’s vertebra
• Jaw tumor of President Grover Cleveland
• Rotating exhibits of photographic art and illustrations
• Tallest skeleton on display in North America
• Albert Einstein’s Brain