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of Physicians



Unlocking the medicine chest

Original resources on the history of
medicine – ideal for thesis research

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ADVANCING SURGICAL STANDARDS



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General Practitioners

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Bringing to life the best in women's health care

The aim of this document is to encourage students to use currently overlooked collections for thesis research on the study of the history of medicine. These collections offer a rich source of information on a wide range of medical topics. Topics covered in this publication are disease, mental health, patients, professionalisation, public health, war and medicine, women and medicine.

This catalogue provides a brief introduction to the available sources from a number of licensing and membership organisations in England and Wales (listed below). Please contact each organisation directly for further details of holdings and to discuss your individual research needs.

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The term 'disease' is used to explain any departure from the normal state of health. There are a number of fields that deal with various aspects of diseases, including epidemiology (the study of factors that cause or encourage diseases) and the most well-known being pathology (the study and diagnosis of diseases).

The history of pathology can be traced back to the Renaissance when people began examining bodies and recording their findings. The examination of bodies led to the post-mortem dissection of bodies in order to identify the cause of death. Pathology began to develop as a science during the 19th century, studied by physicians and surgeons.

Disease

Resources

Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)

- > Epidemic Observation Unit (monitored epidemics not statutorily notifiable, e.g. winter vomiting) papers, 1954–1983
- > Birmingham Research Unit (monitored outbreaks of disease like Influenza) papers, 1958-1990
- > Nutrition and disease study papers, 1965–1965

Royal College of Midwifery (RCM)

- > Case books collated by midwives recording cases of infection, 1920s-1960s

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)

- > Investigations into pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, 1980s-1990s
- > Discussion of puerperal fever and infection, 1920s-1940s
- > Articles and papers relating to puerperal infection and morbidity, late 1700s–1940s

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)

- > Clinical research papers and policy memorandum on Rickets and TB in children, 1945-1983
- > Standing committee on immunisations and vaccinations, 1986-1994
- > Policy statements and papers of the Working Party on AIDS in Infancy and Childhood, 1986-1989

Royal College of Physicians (RCP)

- > Plague, outbreaks and treatments, 1600s-1700s
- > Cholera and Typhus, outbreaks and treatments, 1800s
- > Deptford (infectious diseases) Hospital papers, 1877-1892

Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSEng)

- > Notes, taken by students, on subjects including pathology, from lectures by John Hunter, John Abernethy etc., 1700s-1800s
- > Case notes and illustrations by surgeons recording patients (civilians and military), treatment, and notes of experiments, 1700s-1900s
- > London Lock Hospital (venereal diseases) papers, including drawings showing patient symptoms, 1800s-1900s

Royal Society of Medicine (RCM)

- > Papers of the Pathological Society of London: committee records; annual reports, membership papers, grants for research, minutes, correspondence, accounts, 1846–1907
- > Papers of the Paediatrics & Child Health Section, 1908–2006
- > Papers of the Sexuality and Sexual Health Section, 1986-2002
- > Papers of the Oncology Section: 1991–2004

The history of mental health goes back to early civilisations when the mentally ill were thought to be possessed with evil spirits, or regarded as witches. During the 1700s and 1800s, legislation was passed to regulate the treatment and care of the mentally ill. This resulted initially in the establishment of madhouses where treatment was poor and abusive. This changed with government intervention, and the establishment of county asylums where non-restraint methods of treatment were later introduced.

At the same time some members of the medical profession began to show interest in the diagnostic, clinical, therapeutic, and legal aspects of the care of the insane. The recognition that the mind is the function of the brain increased acceptance by doctors that mental illness was in fact a disease and fell within the province of the medical profession. Since then mental healthcare and treatment has come to be known as psychiatry. Developments in psychiatry include the move from using electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) to the use of antidepressants and other antipsychotic drugs in treatment, and the move away from asylums to psychiatric units in hospitals and community rehabilitation.

Mental health

Resources

RCGP

- > Papers of the Psychiatry and the General Practitioner Working Party, 1956-1959
- > Training for GPs to treat mental illness and papers of the Mental Health Fellowship, 1983-1995
- > Clinical Research papers into Depression and Mental Illness 1954–1992

RCM

- > Midwifery papers relating to the mental health of women during and after pregnancy, 1940s

RCPCH

- > Standing Committee on mental health and psychiatry, 1948-1974
- > Reports on Child psychiatry services, 1940's

RCP

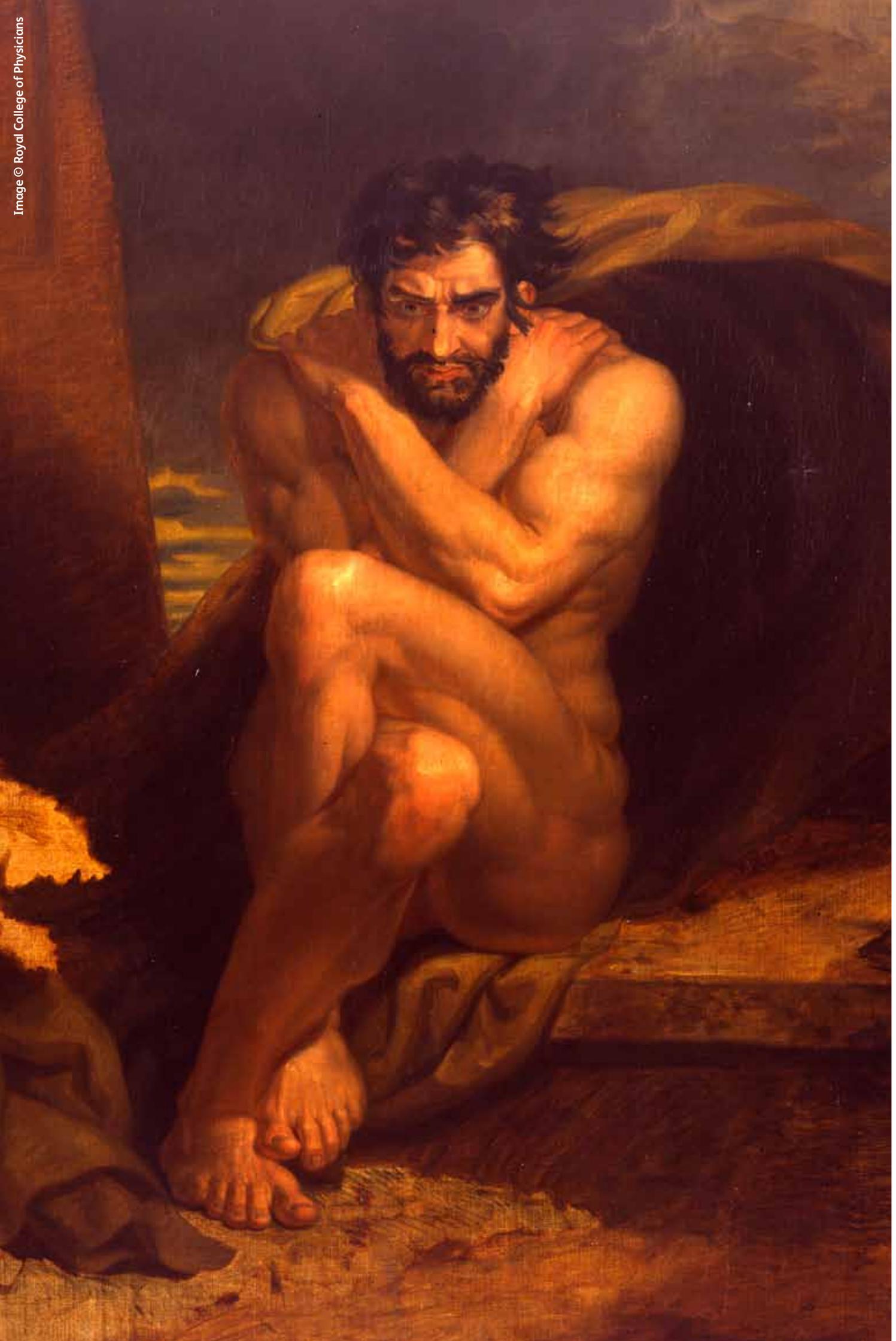
- > Records on acts for regulating mad houses and powers of inspection, 1700s

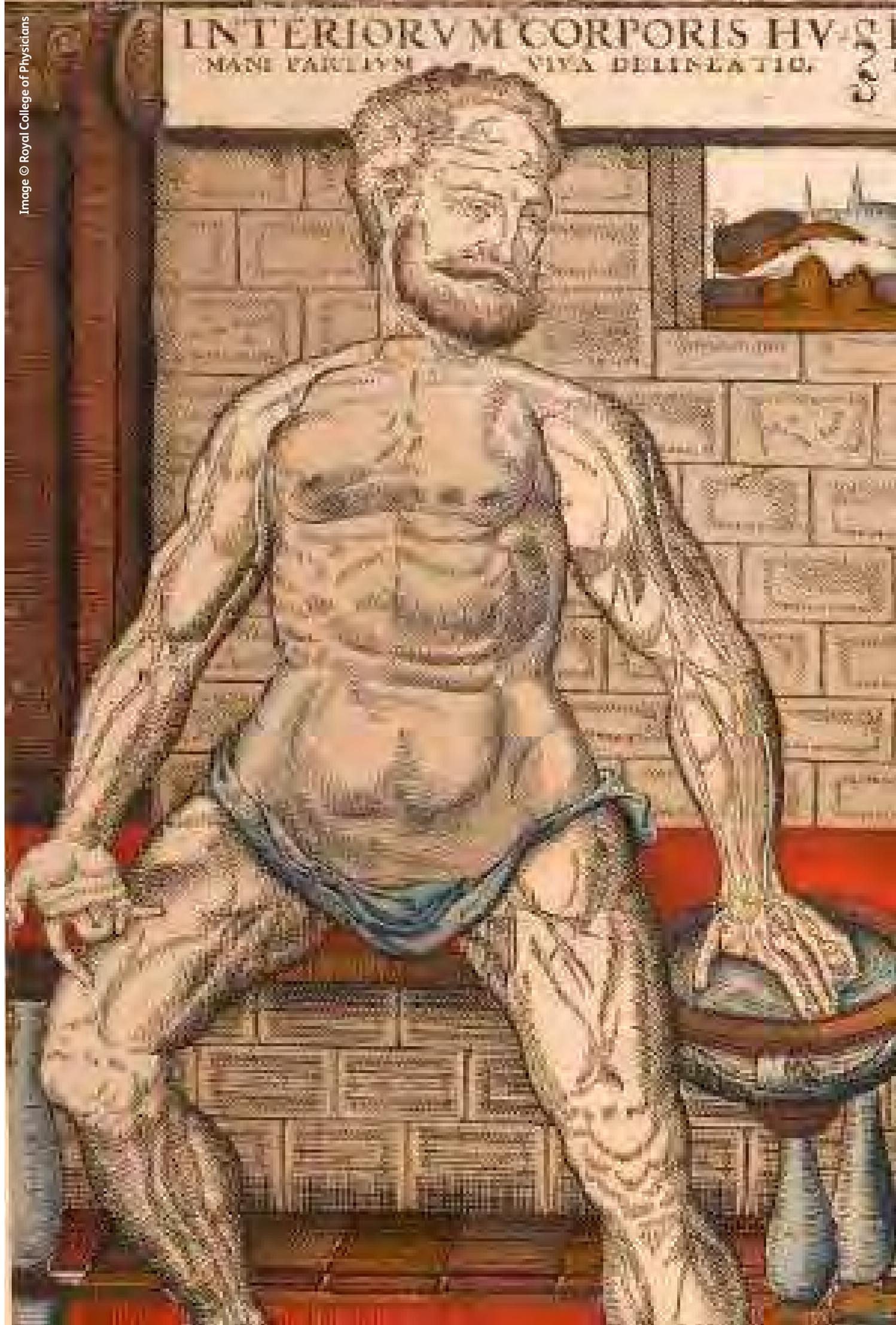
RCPsych

- > Lunacy Commissioners Reports, 1843-1915; Board of Control Reports, 1916-1937
- > Records of Committees and working parties on mental health, 1906-present
- > Records on education and training of mental health professionals, 1890s-present

RSM

- > Psychiatry Section: accounts, attendance, membership, minutes and programmes, 1912–1999
- > Psychiatry Section: subcommittee on cyclothymia (chronic bipolar disorder), 1912–1969





Official records compiled by hospitals and medical practitioners have always focused on the provision of treatment and the effects of treatment from a clinical viewpoint. Standardised forms for recording admission and treatment were developed by the 1800s but before then, information recorded on patients and the treatment received varied enormously between individuals and institutions.

There is very little structured content relating to the patient experience of medicine. There are occasional snapshots of the patient experience in surviving diaries and correspondence of private individuals but these are quite difficult to identify from most catalogues. The most famous example of this type of record is Samuel Pepys' description of his experience of suffering from a kidney stone and the operation he endured to remove it, in his diary.

Patients

Resources

RCGP

- > A sample collection of Lloyd-George style case notes of recently deceased patients, 1960s
- > Patient records in the personal papers of doctors conducting research, 1950s-1970s
- > Papers and minutes of the Patient Liaison Group, later the Patient Participation Group, 1980s-2010

RCOG

- > Case records for cancer research work carried out by the Liverpool Medical Research Organisation under Professor William Blair-Bell, 1920s

RCP

- > Post mortem reports, instructions for treatments, records of symptoms and patient case notes, 1500s-1970s
- > Earliest known sufferer's account of Disseminated Sclerosis (case of Augustus D'Este), 1822-1846
- > Records of admittance and treatment in hospitals, in personal collections, 1800s-1900s

RCSEng

- > Private case notes, patient records and post-mortem records from individual surgeons, 1700s-1900s
- > Administrative records and depictions of patients from the London Lock Hospital (venereal diseases), 1746-1948

RSM

- > Case books of John Bayly, physician, 1761-1769
- > Medical diary and case book of Dr. William Mackinnon Fraser of Southampton, 1780-1789
- > Undulant Fever: register of cases, 1930-1961

During the period from 1700, medicine became a profession: a prestigious, high-income, high social-status career.

This process involved establishing acceptable training regimes, examinations and qualifications; forming professional bodies such as the royal colleges to oversee members' conduct; the advancement of scientific knowledge; disseminating information through education, journals and publications; creating standards, rules and regulations; legislation; and the social acceptance of the profession by the public.

Resources

RCGP

- > Records of the Steering Committee formed to set up the RCGP, 1951-1952
- > Records of Research, Ethics, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education Committees 1952–2010
- > Professional development programmes, e.g. Revaluing General Practice 1992-1997, Revalidation 1990s-2010

RCM

- > Records of the foundation of the Midwives Institute and Council of the RCM, including the campaign for registration of midwives and improvement of working conditions, 1890-1949

RCOG

- > Records of the foundation of the College and the establishment of formal training for obstetricians and gynaecologists, 1929-1980s
- > Records of RCOG Committees with Government and External Bodies, 1940s-2000s
- > Records of the Overseas Doctors Training Scheme, 1981-2000

RCPCH

- > Records of the foundation of the BPA and campaign for a College of Paediatrics, 1928-1996
- > Records of the Academic Board, 1963-1995

RCP

- > Foundation records (1518) and early establishment, 1500s-1600s
- > Student notes from lecture courses at medical schools or teaching hospitals, some delivered by eminent medical personalities, 1700s-1800s

RCSEng

- > Papers of the Company of Surgeons and Foundation and governance records of RCSEng, 1750-1800
- > Development of MRCS and FRCS examinations, conjoint examinations with the RCP and specialty examinations diplomas, 1800-present
- > Papers of Fellows and Members including meeting minutes and correspondence showing their involvement with the development of College, 1870s-1990

RSM

- > Student notes on lectures, including those given by eminent surgeons and physicians, 1700–1800s
- > Papers of the foundation, governance and development of the RSM and predecessor organisations, 1805–present
- > Papers of seventeen specialist societies that joined the RSM, 1846-1908



Public health

Public health is the term that defines the efforts of health professionals to prolong our lives by curing disease and encouraging people to make informed healthy choices about their lives. It has been practised in different forms since ancient times. The health of any population relies on an interconnected web of specialists who feed into the two overarching principles of prevention and promotion. In the UK, public and private sector medical and scientific bodies work together to examine the impact of epidemiology, health economics, public policy on the health of the population.

Primary care and the NHS are at the heart of front-line services working to counteract health inequalities and improve the length and quality of our lives, but public health is also about the wider health context. There are now surveillance centres across the world trying to predict the spread of diseases and why particular conditions occur in certain populations. From John Snow's identification of a cholera-polluted well in London in the 19th century to the World Health Organization's campaign to educate and combat AIDS, or deal with an outbreak of SARS, public health is a broad yet critical subject.



Resources

RCGP

- > Papers of the National Morbidity Surveys (studied how diseases impacted on quality and length of life), 1950s-1980s
- > GP research into public health topics such as Diabetes, Obesity, Oral Contraceptives and communicable diseases like influenza, 1950s–1990s
- > Papers on work with public health groups and contribution to standards, 1980s-1990s

RCOG

- > Papers of committees on maternal mortality, maternity services, a national maternity service, nutrition in pregnancy and IVF, 1930s-1980s

RCPCH

- > Committee on the care of homeless children, 1940s
- > Policy, Memorandum and Guidance on School Health Services, 1944-2005
- > Policy and guidance on Community Child Health and the training of specialists in Community Paediatrics, 1974-1999

RCP

- > Committee papers relating to the formation of the NHS, 1946-1948
- > Smoking and health, ground breaking reports which linked smoking to mortality, 1960s-1970s

RCSEng

- > Papers of Lord Joseph Lister, including correspondence on cases, notes and conclusions of experiments on healing wounds with and without antiseptics, 1850-1912
- > Edward Jenner's notes, correspondence and manuscript on vaccination, 1796-1978
- > Papers on the establishment and early years of the Blood Transfusion Service in Britain, c1926-1938

RSM

- > Papers of Epidemiology and Public Health Section, 1907–2005
- > Forum on Medical Communication: minutes, meeting papers, programmes, 1984–1999
- > Prevention of Cancer Committee, 1923



Both the first and second world wars had an undeniable effect on the health of the population, both at home and abroad. Rationing and food shortages had a detrimental effect on nutrition, whilst damaged hospitals struggled to cope with an influx of casualties. Post-war health issues were just as critical, as the care of orphaned children and injured servicemen remained a key issue for the health profession.

Institutions, organisations and individuals worked to safeguard the health of a population suffering from the effects of war, and sought to influence policy and support doctors and health professionals during the war effort. Personal papers and memoirs often reveal recollections at what was a challenging time for healthcare delivery.

Resources

RCGP

- > Comparison of GPs pre- and post WWI work in an industrial practice, DOH Subcommittee on General Practice Papers, 1960s
- > Sir James MacKenzie's Guide to War Office Medical Examiners of Recruits on abnormal heart sounds, 1915
- > Written memoirs of GPs training and practicing during WWII, 1930s-1940s

RCOG

- > Correspondence on the development of a policy for maternity services for evacuated women, 1939

RCPCH

- > Correspondence between the BPA and various bodies on the evacuation of children during WW2 and ensuring their health, 1939-1942
- > BPA report on War Time Nurseries, 1942-1943
- > Papers on the retention of Sick Children's Nurses during WWII, 1940-1945

War & medicine

RCP

- > Account of work in the Friends ambulance service during World War I, 1914-1918

RCSEng

- > Papers of surgical figures who held key positions during wartime, including Sir Anthony Bowlby, and Gordon Gordon Taylor. Also papers of surgeons who saw active service, 1914-1919 and 1939-1946
- > Records (notes and illustrations) of the reconstructive surgery carried out by Sir Harold Gillies, as well as the visual records of the work of other surgeons, c1914-1960

RSM

- > Papers of the United Services Section, 1919 – 2006
- > Papers of Emergency Surgical Aid Executive Committee, 1914-1926
- > Surgical Advisory Committee: minutes, 1917-1919
- > Catastrophes and Conflict Forum: meeting papers, 2001 – 2002

Women's health covers the development of knowledge and regulation on the management of women's diseases and, in particular, reproductive health and pregnancy. This development can be traced through the registration of midwives and improvements in maternity services and training, developments in contraception, fertility treatments and gynaecological procedures, and better understanding of the female body and its maladies.

Political agendas can be traced through the history of the Abortion Acts, female circumcision, and maternal and perinatal mortality, while technological advances can be traced in research on gynaecological cancers, radiology, anaesthesia, caesarean section and ultrasound.

Women working in the different specialties faced specific challenges through the years, including the impact of part-time working, as well as the traditional hostility to women in the medical profession. Over the 20th century, there was the rise of nurses and midwives to fully trained, professional and salaried health workers. Most collections reflect women as patients and practitioners.

women and medicine

Resources

RCGP

- > Papers on women's health issues (including osteoporosis, infertility, cervical screening, mammography, domestic violence), 1991–1994
- > Papers on long term research studies, including the Oral Contraceptives Study 1965-1991; Outcome of Pregnancy Study, 1970–1985; Attitudes to Pregnancy Study, 1971–1993; Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) Study papers, 1976-1994
- > Papers of the operation of the 'Emma's Diary' publication, a handbook to pregnancy, 1989-2010
- > Papers on women in General Practice, 1985-1993

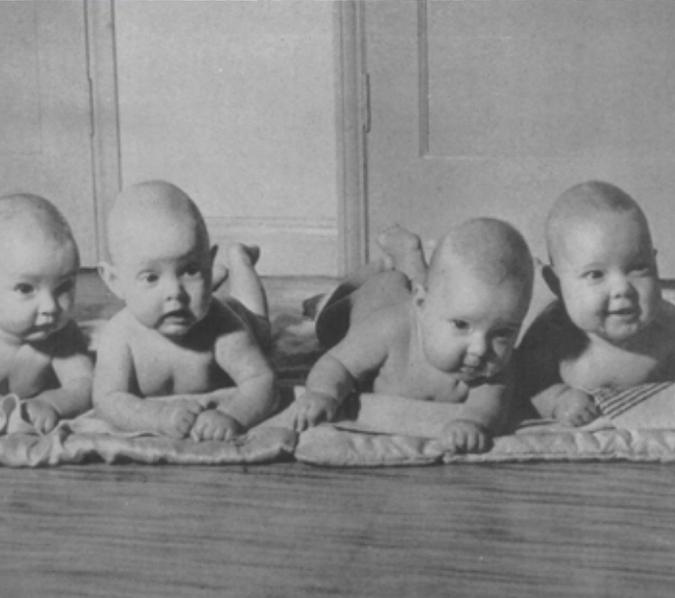
RCM

- > Papers of the Royal College of Midwives on the Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality, 1924-1938
- > Royal College of Midwives Commission on the Legislation of Midwives, 1990-1992
- > Case registers recording details of births, both domiciliary and institutional, as recorded by midwives according to requirements of the Central Midwives Board, 1920s-1990s





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RCSEng

- > Domestic medical recipe collections compiled by women for treating their families, households and estates, 1700s-1800s
- > Papers of women's struggles to gain admission to the College, 1850-1911
- > 'Lives of the Fellows' obituaries for female fellows of the College, 1911-present

RSM

- > Obstetrical Society of London, 1858-1907 and British Gynaecological Society, 1884-1907
- > Removal of Baker-Brown from the Obstetrical Society of London for Clitoridectomy without consent: press cuttings and accounts of trial, 1864-1867
- > Lectures on midwifery by eminent practitioners, 1700-1800s

RCOG

- > Notes of lectures on midwifery, 1600s-1800s
- > Records relating to the evacuation of maternity services during the Second World War
- > Committees and Working party on fertility, childbirth, neonatal and perinatal care, 1940s-1990s
- > Obstetric flying squads survey, 1980-1987

RCPCH

- > Policy memorandum on Infant Feeding, 1942-1999.
- > Papers on the prevention of Perinatal and early neonatal mortality and morbidity, 1976, and the care of neonates, 1960-2000.
- > Papers on IVF/Artificial insemination 1959-1987
- > Policy memorandum and papers on female circumcision, 1982-1984

RCP

- > Prosecution of women for practicing without qualifications 'malpractice', 1500s-1700s
- > Domestic medical recipe collections compiled mostly by educated women for treating their families, households and estates, 1500s-1800s
- > 'Lives of the Fellows' obituaries for female fellows of the College, 1930s-present

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