



Who do you think you are?

Researching your family tree for medical ancestors

Getting started

It is important to write down everything you know about your family history already. Start by confirming the facts you already 'know', to make sure that the facts haven't become distorted over time. Once you have full records of the known history, you can start to fill in the blanks.

When you are trying to get information or confirm facts about a medical ancestor, try to find out:

- the full name of the doctor/surgeon etc.
- the places they lived in
- the hospitals they worked in
- approximate dates of birth, death and employment

Were they a medical practitioner?

Since 1859 all medical practitioners must be registered with a licence to practise with the General Medical Council to practise medicine in the UK.

Before the GMC was founded in 1859, there was no central authority which licensed medical practitioners. Therefore there was no central list of qualified medical practitioners.

Inspiring Physicians (Royal College of Physicians of London)

Published biographies of professional lives of medical doctors in England both licensed by and full voting members of the RCP, listing qualifications

Licentiates and members (non voting) 1518-1820

Fellows (full voting members) 1518-2011

Published vols I-XI 1581-2004 (RCP library)

Online 2005 onwards <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians>

Medical register (General Medical Council)

If someone practiced medicine since 1859, their name, qualifications and address (professional or personal) has been listed in the register

Published annually 1859-2004 (RCP library)

2005 onwards on GMC website as the 'List of registered medical practitioners' http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/medical_register.asp

Medical directory (Informa healthcare publishing)

Alphabetical listing of almost all UK-based medical practitioners, with their name, qualifications, address (professional or personal) and current appointment.

Published annually 1845-present (RCP library)

<http://www.informahealthcarebooks.com/medical-directory-875.html>

Index cards fellows, members and diplomates (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists)

Alphabetical listings 1929-1998

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/what-we-do/information-services/archives>

Membership records (Royal College of Psychiatrists)

Membership lists published in the *Journal of Mental Science* 1850s to the 1960 (RCPsych Library)

Year Books containing membership lists 1930s to 1969 (RCPsych archives)

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/archiveslists.aspx>

Lives of the fellows (Royal College of Surgeons of England)

Published biographies of professional lives of surgeons in England who were full voting members of the RCS 1844-2002 (RCP library)

Online https://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/client/en_GB/lives

Eighteenth Century Medics

1600s-1700s Wallis

Name, medical profession, date and source of information (RCP library)

Apprentice, licentiate and membership lists (Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London)

Apothecaries were originally community pharmacists. But by the 1700s they were diagnosing and prescribing treatments as well as dispensing drugs. By the 19th century they had evolved into general practitioners, GPs.

The Society of Apothecaries licensed medical practitioners to practise as apothecaries and licensed surgeons and others in general practice.

Lists of freemen and apprentices within 7 miles of the city of London 1617-1815

Lists of licensed apothecaries in England 1815-1858

A directory of English Country Physicians

1603-1643 Raach (RCP library)

Medical licences issued by the church

Details of medical licences issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury 1535-1775

<http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/content/medicallicences>

Medical Practitioners in the Diocese of London

1529-1725 Bloom and James (RCP library)

What did they do/who did they work with?

Inspiring Physicians (Royal College of Physicians of London)

Published biographies of professional lives of medical doctors, both licensed by and full voting members of the RCP, with some personal information

Licentiates and members (non voting) 1518-1820

Fellows (full voting members) 1518-present day

Published vols I-XI 1581-2004 (RCP library)

Online 2005 onwards <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians>

Archives (Royal College of Physicians of London)

Institutional activities of Royal College of Physicians from foundation, 1518 to the present day

Unpublished papers belonging to, written by or mentioning individuals who had links with or worked for the RCP, 1518-present day

Summary information online <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/collections/archives>

Online catalogue <http://rcp-asp.adlibhosting.com/>

Card index (RCP library)

Catalogues online at A2A, on the national archives website

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/>

College lists (Royal College of Physicians of London)

Details of fellows' formal activities of behalf of the RCP

Details of other medical practitioners who gave lectures, sat on committees, were awarded prizes

Published 1910-present day (RCP library)

Lives of the fellows (Royal College of Surgeons of England)

Published biographies of professional lives of surgeons in England who were full voting members of the RCS 1844-2002 (RCP library)

Online https://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/client/en_GB/lives

Hospital records database (The National Archives)

Existence and location of the records of UK hospitals, including staff and patients:

- administrative details of the hospitals, and their status or type
- location and covering dates of administrative and clinical records
- existence of lists, catalogues or other finding aids
- links to some online hospital catalogues on Access to Archives (A2A).

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/search.asp>

Archives (Royal College of General Practitioners)

Institutional activities of Royal College of General practitioners 1952-present day contact the library

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/about-us/contact-us.aspx>

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/about-us/the-college/who-we-are/history-heritage-and-archive/researching-a-medical-ancestor.aspx>

Archives (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists)

Institutional activities of Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists 1929-present day

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/what-we-do/information-services/archives>

Archives (Royal College of Midwives)

Institutional activities of Royal College of Midwives 1890-present day

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/what-we-do/information-services/archives>

Archives (Royal College of Psychiatrists)

Institutional activities of Royal College of Psychiatrists 1850s-present day

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/archiveslists.aspx>

Archives (Royal College of Surgeons of England)

Institutional activities of Royal College of Surgeons of England from beginnings as the Company of Surgeons (1745-1800), incorporation as a Royal College (1800) to the present day

<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/archives/whats-in-the-archives>

Archives (Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London)

Institutional activities of Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, 1617-present day

<http://www.apothecaries.org/>

ARCHON directory (The National Archives)

This directory includes contact details for most record repositories in the United Kingdom and also for institutions elsewhere in the world which have substantial collections of manuscripts relating to British national history. This is the best place to search for information on which archive institutions are situated within a geographical area in the UK. If you know an ancestor lived or worked in a specific place, but are unsure where any surviving records might be held, this is a good place to start. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/default.htm>

Books on the subject

Tracing your medical ancestors: a guide for family historians, Michelle Higgs, 2011 (RCP library)

Subscription services on family history research

These are fee based services which bring together freely available resources into a central online location. This cuts down the amount of time required to find and use these resources in their original locations. Sometimes they offer the only digital versions of specific resources.

They usually offer different levels of membership with resources available restricted according to the level of membership. Below are three of the most popular services.

<http://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

<http://www.sog.org.uk/>