



The *Oslerian*

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The AOS – "In the Company of Friends"

In this, my final "President's Column", I would focus your attention on four societies that share with the AOS a commitment to teaching, patient care and the study of medical history. Over the past 15-20 years, I've had the good fortune to attend Clinical Meetings in many countries, and medical history has been included to varying degrees in each of these meetings. Unfortunately, distance, linguistic barriers and costs have limited collaboration between these programs. Here are four worthwhile groups I would share with our membership.

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1. The Medical Faculty at Kazan State University, Kazan, Russia (from Airat Zigasian, MD, PhD).

Situated in the central Russian city, Kazan State University was founded in 1804. Its medical school opened ten years later. The University is known as the birthplace of organic chemistry, and, most recently, of electron spin resonance. Throughout most of the 19th century, young faculty from Kazan were sent to Paris and other centers of learning in Europe to study under Pierre Louis, Dupuytren, Claude Bernard, and other educators. These physicians from Central Russia were taught in the same classrooms and by the same teachers as their contemporaries who traveled from America, to study in Universities in France, the Netherlands, England and Germany.

The History of Medicine is established as a distinct department at Kazan University. Displays of archives, instruments and academic achievements are exhibited in a Medical Museum and an ancient library which houses an extensive collection of books filed using an ancient method: neatly piled in stacks rather than being shelved in bookcases. A formal curriculum is offered to students interested in medical careers and history. An annual meeting devoted to the History of Medicine is sponsored by the University for physicians throughout Central Russia.

2. The Polish Society of Internal Medicine (from President Eugene Joseph Kucharz, MD, on its 100th Anniversary)

In Poland, the Society of Internal Medicine was founded 1891. By the end of the 19th century, internal medicine was recognized in Poland as a medical specialty at a time when there was no independent Polish state, an Organizing Committee of Internal Medicine was created and the first "Congress of the Society of Internists of Polish Lands" was convened in Lvov in July 22-25, 1907. In 1923, in free Poland, after a break caused by World War I and the Polish-Bolshevik War, the organization resumed its work and its name was changed to the Polish Society of Internal Medicine.

Polish internists and other medical specialists have always been very open to cooperation with colleagues from abroad. The founders of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine organized scientific meetings of doctors coming from the Slavonic countries in the first part of the 20th century.



**President John Noble,
shown here stepping down
from the lectern in Cleveland**

*Greetings,
Fellow Oslerians!*

(continued on pg 2)

President's Message *(continued)*

The goal of this society was to propagate science and encourage cooperation and progress in science. These meetings have continued annually to the present. In 1996, the Polish internists attended the first Central European Congress of Internal Medicine.

During the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Polish Society of Internal medicine in 2007, President Kucharz, shared these reflections at the celebration:

"Medicine teaches modesty in relation to the sophisticated phenomena taking place in human organisms. Feeling this modesty, we express the admiration and respect for the great creators of internal medicine. Thanks to their discoveries, relentless work and vision of the future, modern development of medicine is possible. We make use of their discoveries in everyday work, not always being conscious of this fact."

3. The Japanese Osler Society (from Shigeaki Hinohara, MD)

At the end of World War-2, Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara was given his first copy of *Aequanimitas* in Tokyo by the Chief of Surgery on General Macarthur's staff. Dr Hinohara has explained the importance of this gift: "Through Dr. Bower's kindness, I was captured by the spirit of Osler." After ten years he completed a translation of Osler's textbook and published it in Japan. During an outstanding 60 year career, Dr Hinohara has applied the ideals and scholarship of William Osler as a paradigm for students to emulate. The Japanese Osler Society has a membership of over 90 physicians. The Society sponsors an Annual Meeting and frequently has members in attendance at the AOS Annual Meeting as well as at other International Oslerian Meetings.

4. London Osler Club (from Jock Murray MD, Past President, AOS; Honorary Member, LOC)

Formed in 1928, the year that Lady Osler died, the London Osler Club has well attended monthly meetings at the Royal College of Physicians, with talks on a wide variety of topics related to the history of medicine and humanistic approaches to medicine. Each session begins with a presentation, always, followed by a dinner and good conversation. The talks are consistently excellent and the question period is lively.

There is a good interchange between the AOS and the LOC: many physicians are members of both organizations. We often see LOC officers at our meeting – Neil McIntyre, Arthur Holman, and John Ward.

The annual LOC Osler Oration is a highlight and AOS members might be interested to note that among the list of prominent orators have been Wilder Penfield, Lord Walton of Detchat, Charles Bryan and Jock Murray. Other AOS members who belong to the LOC include Bruce Fye, John Carson, George Ebers, Richard Golden, Larry Longo, The Secretary of the LOC is Adrian Thomas (Adrian.thomas@btinternet.com).

Summary: Four groups scattered across the globe share similar interests in the history of medicine, advancing medical knowledge, and improving the quality of patient care. AOS members may enjoy, as I have, attending their meetings. — John Noble, M.D.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS:



The Chief

The Chief once urged physicians to have a hobby and ride it hard. Not content as Professor of Pathology at UNC, **Oslerian Mike Jones** has gone on to pursue a hobby and complete a BA in history, to be granted by U of TX at Austin in May of this year. He'll be addressing the Trent History of Med Society at Duke in February 2010, and he continues his work on the AOS website. The "Ask Osleriana" database is a useful source to research items for talks for our annual meetings. The database is accessible through the website [www.americanosler.org]. Mike has been uploading corrected documents to the database, particularly in the Cushing biography. A number of digitized abstracts of past meeting presentations are also being uploaded. Perhaps the largest new addition will be the Maude Abbott Memorial Volume. of remembrances of Osler.)



Dr. Mike Jones

MEMORABLE QUOTE "World War I was the first armed conflict in history in which battle injuries caused more deaths than disease, despite widespread typhus, typhoid, and dysentery." [from Hans Zinsser: *Rats, Lice and History* ©1934] Yet the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918 claimed as many victims in four months as the Great War had in four years. The outbreak began at Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1918 and after being carried by the soldiers to Europe, it raced across the globe. Estimates are that nearly 40 million persons died. The moniker Spanish Influenza was applied because earlier that year a much milder outbreak had occurred in Spain.

3 NEW BOOKS BY OSLERIANS

Osler's Bedside Library: Great Writers Who Inspired a Great Physician.

Edited by: Michael A. LaCombe and David J. Elpern. Philadelphia, ACP Press

© 2010, 362 pgs, \$ 59.35.

"In the morning have a book open on your dressing table," writes the Chief in the paragraph in which he introduces his BED-SIDE LIBRARY FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS on the final page of the 1932 edition of *Aequanimitas*. I'm an early riser, and for several weeks this winter I kept this new paperback open on my kitchen table, and read a chapter each morning. They vary in length and in how they relate to Sir William. It's a good read. Four chapters in this multi-authored book are by AOS members (Lynn Epstein, Paul Mueller, Jock Murray and Joel Howell; about Montaigne, Robert Burns, Robert Burton, and Henrik Ibsen, respectively). Most essays give a flavor for the various authors and some are downright enticing.

The book deals with not only with the ten volumes that Osler listed, but has additional essays on twenty other authors, which the editors divide into six sections: Poets; Masters of the Story; Thinkers; Dramatists; An Unforgettable Journal; and The Shoulders upon Which We Stand. They chose these works "for their accessibility, their variety, and for their adjunctive supplement" to a modern medical student's education. It seems somewhat arbitrary; many Oslerians might have chosen others. Chekhov was not one of the dramatists; I would have included him. In all there are 33 enjoyable essays (Shakespeare merits four, about *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and the *Sonnets*).

Rita Charon, who writes on the Old and New Testaments, treats the Bible as literature and gives a detailed, almost esoteric commentary based on two passages (Isaiah 43 and Christ's encounter with Nicodemus in John 3). But she hardly mentions the scores of Biblical allusions that enrich Osler's essays and addresses. Others – like Audrey Shafer writing about Dickens – let the author's prose speak for itself. In writing about Sir Thomas Browne (Sir William's great role model), Jack Coulehan suggests seven additional models that might be more acceptable for today's medical students: Chekhov, Schweitzer, Paul Farmer, William Carlos Williams, Robert Coles, Richard Selzer and Eric Cassell.

Being familiar with those seven, and having attempted different editions of the *Religio Medici* unsuccessfully at various times, I liked his essay and applaud his broaching those seven additional authors.

Perhaps the most vexing thing about this small volume is the ex-corporation of the reference lists for the chapters. [Personally I prefer references as footnotes (to access them fast without turning pages; but most books now use end-notes).] So being even further removed – viz, having to go online to check a reference – was especially onerous. The list, which is found at [www.acponline.org/acp_press/osler_library/references2.pdf], runs to 40 pages – probably why it's not included in the book – and also why I didn't print it out. But as a compensation, by using links on the list, you can access the book's pictures and many of the works themselves (via Project Gutenberg E-texts). Coulehan's chapter has the most references (87); a few had twenty; most had less than ten citations.

There is considerable variability in the essays, such that I wondered if the editors asked their contributors to answer this important question: **Why should I read this particular author?** That seems to me a fundamental goal of such a collection, one that was not uniformly addressed, and one that would have enhanced its appeal.

– JBV

Duffin, Jacalyn, Medical Miracles: Doctors, Saints, and Healing in the Modern World.
New York: Oxford U. Press © 2009. 285pg, hardcover. \$29.95

In connection with daily devotions, I was reading a book called *All Saints*, by Robert Ellsberg, a compendium of 366 brief biographies of persons that the author loosely calls saints, including many outside the Catholic tradition (such as Gandhi, M.L. King and Dag Hammarskjöld). Just as I asked myself **How does one become a Saint?** a copy of Jacalyn Duffin's new book arrived. It's a fascinating read. I'm a Christian but not a Catholic (Jacalyn is), and I suspect this well-researched study would be most easily comprehended by a Catholic. Nonetheless, I learned a great deal about sainthood from this work, the product of four trips to Rome in which Duffin did exhaustive research in the Vatican Archives and Library. (My only suggestion for a second edition of this interesting book would be to include a *glossary of terms*, letting non-Catholic readers quickly become familiar with many arcane terms used by the Church in the making of saints.)

(continued next page)

NEW BOOKS BY OSLERIANS (Cont.)

Her interest in the subject was sparked when as a hematologist she was asked to do a "blind" review of a series of bone marrow samples taken from a female patient over an eighteen month period. They showed a severe leukemia and documented a remission, a relapse, and another remission. It turned out the patient, still alive, attributed her cure to the intercession of a Montreal woman (Marie-Marguerite d'Youville) who'd been dead for two centuries. From her involvement in the medical aspects of this case, Dr. Duffin was invited to participate in the canonization ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. There she was given a gift of the *Positio*, the bound copy of the testimony about the miraculous cure of this leukemia patient. As many AOS members know, in addition to being a physician, Jackie is a superb historian, and holds the Hannah Chair for the History of Medicine at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario. This particular case got her started on an extensive study of medical miracles and the process by which Catholic saints are identified.

Prior to the Council of Trent (1545-1563) sainthood in the Roman Catholic tradition was "a matter of consensus and local veneration of apostles, martyrs, hermits and healers." That all changed about 1588 when the process of canonization was formalized by the establishment of the SRC (Sacra Rituum Congregatio), which is "charged with gathering and challenging evidence concerning the lives and deeds of potential saints." The process is one of meticulous authentication. Duffin studied the documents for 1400 saints canonized from 1588 to 1999. She discusses in detail the steps necessary for beatification and canonization, which have changed little over the years. To become a saint in the Catholic tradition requires first that the candidate (called a Servant of God, and always deceased) had lead an exemplary life of holiness. Then a documented miracle, usually a healing (which especially interested Duffin as a physician) must be attributed to the candidate. Witnesses are deposed during the process, which is tedious, detailed, and carefully annotated. Oftentimes witnesses are physicians. As she succinctly puts it, the essence of a miraculous healing lies in "**the contemporary inability to explain** the recovery on the part of witnesses" [her emphasis]. As medical science evolved and advanced through the four centuries of her study, the approach to miracles changed; but, she states "... in the process of canonization, religion draws from and is instructed by

science – and not just any random science, but the best available [science]."

In the book's concluding chapter Duffin confesses that when asked if she believes in miracles, she responds, "Yes, I do." Having carefully reviewed over a thousand documented miracles in the Vatican records, she brings to bear the observational rigor of historian and physician, and her account is punctuated with dozens of intriguing accounts of healings. Her book is extensively annotated, mostly from sources in the Vatican Archives, but also included in her comprehensive bibliography are references to the works of modern physician investigators of prayer's efficacy, including Benson, Koenig, and Matthews. This book should appeal to physicians interested in healing through the centuries.

Oliver Wendell Holmes: Physician and Man of Letters. Scott H. Podolsky & Charles S. Bryan, Eds. Sagamore Beach, ME: Science History Publications © 2009. Paperback, 274 pg.

You'll get a taste of Holmes in a seven page chapter about him in *Osler's Bedside Library* (reviewed on page 3 of this issue), but if you would like a detailed, comprehensive, and readable introduction to him, peruse this excellent volume edited by Charles Bryan and Scott Podolsky. Sir William praised Holmes (1809-1894) as "the most successful combination which the world has ever seen, of the physician and the man of letters." This delightful volume commemorates the bicentennial of his birth, examines the man in depth and gives extended examples of Holmes' scientific and non-medical writings. Charlie Bryan's opening chapter, "The Greatest Brahmin" is a splendid overview of Homes, who was teacher, physician, Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, Dean of Harvard Medical School (1847-53) and father of the great jurist.

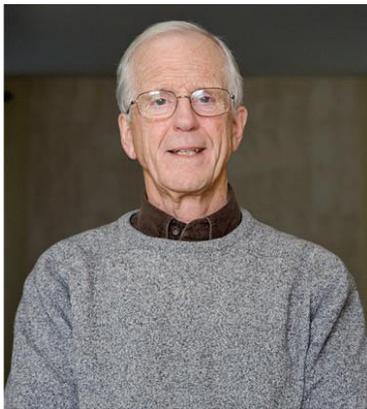
Bryan asks, "***Is Holmes still relevant, and if so, to what extent? And why is Holmes, once so famous in two disparate fields, so little-known today?***" The answers are found in Part I of this book, comprised of outstanding essays by five authors about Holmes' major works. Part II of the book – "The Quotable Holmes," which takes up almost half of the volume – contains selections from most of Dr. Holmes' writings, including his most famous essays and poems.

(Continued on next page)

PLEASE MEET AND GREET THESE NEW OSLERIANS

**JOSEPH J. FINS, M.D., F.A.C.P.**

Dr. Joseph J. Fins is Chief of the Division of Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medical College and Professor of Medicine, Public Health and Psychiatry. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University and Cornell University Medical College (M.D., 1986), with post-graduate training at The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical. Dr. Fins is the author of *Palliative Ethic of Care: Clinical Wisdom at Life's End* (Jones and Bartlett, 2006) and over 200 publications in medical ethics and health policy. He is President-Elect of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, a Governor of the American College of Physicians and has served on the Board of Trustees of Wesleyan University.

**J. GORDON FRIERSON M.D., M.D.**

After graduating from Yale University, Gordon Frierson also attended Cornell University Medical College (MD 1961). He interned at Bellevue Hospital, and after Military Service received a Diploma in Clinical Medicine of the Tropics, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. After an internal medicine residency at UCSF, he took an infectious disease fellowship there. He has been in private practice of internal medicine and infectious diseases and on the clinical faculty in Medicine at UCSF. He is a member of many professional associations, including both the American and the Royal Societies of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

MEMORABLE QUOTE #2

"WORDS ARE ADOPTED. This is of course one of the glories of English – its willingness to take in words from abroad, rather as if they were refugees. We take words from almost anywhere – *shampoo* from India, *chaparral* from the Basques, *caucus* from the Algonquin Indians, *ketchup* from China, *potato* from Haiti, *sofa* from Arabia, *boondocks* from the Tagalog language of the Philippines, *slogan* from Gaelic. You can't get much more eclectic than that." – Bill Bryson in *The Mother Tongue*, © 1990, pg 73.

Oliver Wendell Holmes (Continued from p 4)

I was aware that in 1843 Holmes antedated Semmelweis (1847) in describing the contagiousness of puerperal fever; but I was unaware of how Holmes' novels also presaged Freud's work, as detailed in Michael Weinstein's chapter "Oliver Wendell Holmes's Depth Psychology." I smiled reading Peter Gibian's chapter ("The Life in Conversation"), which began: "A tiny, hyperactive, and hyper-loquacious bundle of energy, Doctor Holmes wanted to play all the parts." And I enjoyed rereading poems like *Old Ironsides*, *The Chambered Nautilus*, and *The Deacon's Masterpiece (the "One-Hoss Shay")* in Part II.

In my library are 1891 editions of Homes' *Medical Essays* and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*; I'm pleased to place **Oliver Wendell Holmes: Physician and Man of Letters** along side them.

– JBV

ATTENTION OSLERIANS!

Clyde Partin is collecting metaphors that Osler used in his writings. If you have a favorite one, or are aware of one in his more obscure writings, do send details to Clyde via e-mail at: clyde.partin@emoryhealthcare.org

Other contact info:

Office: 404-778-2700; Fax: 404-778-2890;

Home: 404-636-0408

He welcomes any and all submissions!

MEMORABLE QUOTE #3

"Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote scientific articles which were distinguished for their liveliness, wit, and graceful expression - and appeared all the more so in a nation which had fallen heir to the Teutonic tradition of great solemnity, and in which the doctors wrote English as though it were German." — Rose TF: Medical Men and Creative Writing, *Canadian Med Assoc J* 1955;72: 308.

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**Aequanimitas**

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Society members are encouraged to send news items of interest, including their personal activities and accomplishments, accompanied by photographs or other illustrations. Your ideas for *The Oslerian* are of course most welcome! Direct all correspondence by e-mail to the Editor at:

joebv2@live.com

We're on the Web!

√ us out at:

www.americanosler.org



**REGISTER NOW
FOR THE
2010 AOS
MEETING
MAYO CLINIC
APRIL 26-29**

**— HIGHLIGHTS —****Monday 26 April — 3:00-5:00 PM Poetry Recitations —**

to sign up! (See *↓)

(In this session, AOS poets will recite their own favorite poems.)

"I have never felt that medicine interfered with me but rather that it was my very food and drink, the very thing which made it possible for me to write." – W.C. Williams

Monday 26 April — 7:30-8:30 PM Creative Writing Session —

to sign up! (See §↓)

(In this session, AOS writers will share their own creations.)

"Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress. When I grow tired of the one, I spend the night with the other." – Anton Chekhov

Tuesday 27 April — 7:45 - Noon: General session and McGovern Lecture; Noon - 1:00 PM Luncheon; 1:00 PM - 4:45 PM: General session

TUES. PAPERS: Osleriana, Pt. I; Medical Practice I; Personalities; Mayo Clinic

4:45-6:00 PM: Historical movies and self-guided tours**6:30-8:30 PM: Reception at the Rochester Art Center**

Wednesday 28 April — 7:40—8:10 AM: Annual AOS Business Meeting; 8:10 - Noon: General session; Noon - 1:00 PM: Luncheon; 1:00 PM to 4:45PM: General session

WED. PAPERS: Medical Practice, Pt. II; Osleriana, Pt. II; Personalities; Patients

Late PM: Self-guided tours; Carillon tour and concert**6:00-7:00 PM: Social hour****7:00-9:00 PM: Banquet & Pres. Noble Address Landow Atrium**

Thursday 29 April — 8:00 AM-12:30 PM: General session; adjourn at 12:30 PM

THURS. PAPERS: Medical Practice Pt. III; Writers and Artists; Ethics and Values

*Capacity limited; Contact F. Neelon < neelon02@duke.edu >§Capacity limited; Contact David Cooper < cooperdk@upmc.edu >

To register, go to www.mayo.edu/cme/apr2010.html
For Hotel reservations, go to: <http://www.thekahlerhotel.com/>

AOS Members — Please forward to the editor information worth sharing with one another for MEMBERS IN THE NEWS column. - JBV