

Chapter 9: Teaching History of Medicine/Healthcare in Residency

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History-based Teaching

Sample Curricula

1. Lesson on the great epidemic of Encephalitis lethargica, 1917-27. This coincided with the influenza epidemic, and may have stood in causal relationship, but was clearly a different clinical and pathological phenomenon. Here the lesson might discuss the status of virology before the epidemic, the work of Count Constantin von Economo in Vienna, the singular pediatric version of EL, and the striking Postencephalitic Parkinsonian (PEP) phenomena. It is a disease of mystery. Why did it vanish, as suddenly as it arose? Why was the pediatric variant so character-changing? What was its relationship to the vast influenza pandemic?
2. Lesson on the rise of cardiac surgery. Discuss the progression from closed-heart operations to valve replacement, then open-heart and cardiac-pulmonary bypass. Who are the "heroic" figures here (who fight bitterly among themselves)? What difference does this make to people's health?
3. Lesson on the history of women's health. There have been vast improvements in the morbidity and mortality attending childbirth, and in the management of such terrible gynecological diseases as cervical cancer. At the same time, the role of male doctors in delivering health-care to women has become increasingly controversial. How do

we sort out here practical contributions to health and wellness from the more sociological aspects of "gendered care"?

Medical history topics of interest to learners

The drama of the polio vaccine, c. 1947-55. Here the story is how many scientific centers had to cooperate in order to produce an effective vaccine for this terrible disease. Sample reading: H Koprowski (July 1960). "Historical Aspects of the Development of Live Virus Vaccine in Poliomyelitis". *Br Med J.* 2 (1960), 85–91. doi:10.1136/bmj.2.5192.85. Practical tip for teaching: The polio story shows, of course, the benefits of basic science to public health. But are there advances in medicine and health that take place serendipitously, without scientific discovery? (e.g. discovery of penicillin). Are there cases where science may lead us astray? (e.g. pseudo-science of Nazi medical experiments).

The rise and fall of the Halsted procedure for breast cancer. Sample reading: Halsted, William S. "I. The Results of Operations for the Cure of Cancer of the Breast Performed at the Johns Hopkins Hospital from June, 1889, to January, 1894". *Annals of Surgery.* 20 (5): 497–555. ISSN 0003-4932. PMC 1493925. PMID 17860107; W. T. Fitts Jr., J. G. Keuhnelian, I. S. Ravdin, and S. Schor, "Swelling of the arm after radical mastectomy. A clinical study of its causes," *Surgery.* 1954; 35(3). 460–464. Practical tip for teaching: Begin with, "What is the status of the Halsted operation today? Why has it been attacked? What is Halsted's proper role in the history of medicine and surgery?"

Wilson's disease

SA Kinnier Wilson and "Wilson's Disease."

Sample reading: Alastair Compston, "Progressive Lenticular Degeneration...by SA Kinnier Wilson, from the National Hospital, Brain, 1912," *Brain*, 132 (2009), 1997-2001. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awp193>.

Wilson's Disease was among the earliest eponyms in neurology, certainly in British neurology. Wilson was at the famous National Hospital in Queen Square. Why was that advantageous? Did Wilson's Disease and similar disorders contribute to Neurology's previous reputation for therapeutic hopelessness? Has that changed today?

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