Revised and Extended

Northwestern University

Medical School

1859-1979

A pioneer in educational reform

By

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Preface

During the first century of its existence no adequate history of Northwestern University Medical School was ever prepared covering any stage of its development. In a review of the medical profession and medical institutions of Chicago, written for the Magazine of Western History (1890), N. S. Davis included a short account of the early years of the institution. He also began a chapter for Wilde’s History of Northwestern University (1905), but death overtook him when only the first five years had been reviewed. This assignment was amended by his son, who added brief memoranda of some happenings between 1864 and 1904. Professor Samuel J. Jones likewise prepared a short historical chapter on the Medical School for Cutler’s History of Medical and Dental Institutions of the West (1896).

In 1924, N. S. Davis III was appointed Historian of the Medical Faculty, with instructions to prepare a record of the Medical School to be filed with the Illinois Medical Society. A copy of this 32-page manuscript is deposited in the Archibald Church Library. It borrowed or paraphrased the account in the History of Northwestern University, and added some material covering events between 1904 and 1925. Somewhat later, Professor James A. James interspersed various items pertaining to the progress of the Medical School since 1870 in an unpublished manuscript on the general history of Northwestern University. Similar miscellany occur in Northwestern University; A History, 1850-1975 by H. F. Wilkinson and P. S. Wild.

In anticipation of the observance of the Centennial of the Medical School in 1959, President Miller and Dean Young com-
missioned the present writer to prepare an historical work tracing the development of the School during that total period. My motivation in undertaking this task stemmed from the conviction that the occasion merited a definitive account that would attempt to be not only entertaining and instructive, but also to constitute a standard source of factual reference on the subject. Because of the signal leadership of the Medical School in reforming the traditional plan of medical education in America, the significance of its contributions can be appreciated only when set against a background of the course of medical education in the Colonies and Republic as a whole. This was done and has been continued throughout the present work, thus broadening the treatment from a local story to a somewhat integrated account of educative medical progress in the nation. Moreover, the progress of the School, since its first association with Northwestern University in 1870, takes on added significance when placed in perspective against the evolving University itself. For this reason, such an historical thread is woven into the main fabric. It is introduced intermittently, spaced at epochal periods in the life of the Medical School and the University.

Northwestern University Medical School is fortunate in possessing an unbroken set of Faculty Minutes from the first organizational meeting in the spring of 1859 down to the present time. It has also a complete set of minutes of the Alumni Association through the years since its founding in 1866. Moreover, the voluminous official minutes of the University Trustees contain material, invaluable to the main account since 1870. Besides supplying unique, basic information, they have made possible the correction of some long-repeated errors of fact and interpretation. In order that the reader may sample and savor the quality and style of important source-material, numerous quotations from the records, from the protagonists and from contemporary commentators have been interlarded in the narrative.

The story of Northwestern University Medical School is both heroic and colorful. It is also richly significant in relation to the progress of medical education in America. To piece together such an integrated account, as well as to put it in perspective with the rise of Northwestern University, has been a fascinating and rewarding task which, in retrospect, must be accounted as a privilege. Sobering to the author is the realization that he has been actively
associated with the Medical School for more than half of its long existence. Yet there is a definite advantage in this since, like Virgil’s Aeneas, one can then tell of “both the things which I myself saw, and those of which I was a part.”

Deviating from the style of many collegiate histories, it was decided not to impair the main flow of the historical account by inserting details on the sequential changes in leadership and personnel in the various departments. Instead, an Appendix has been prepared that lists all such data on administrators, chairmen, professors and associate professors. It was further decided not to encumber the pages with multiple footnotes citing source-material, since such authentication would distract and serve no important purpose.

Taking a long look into the future, one is constrained to point out that Faculty Minutes and other official records are no longer as intimate and informative as they once were, because of a far more complex organization and the delegation of spade work to committees. The decline in the historical value of the Faculty Minutes dates from the first appointment of an Executive Committee in 1878. The task of a future historian, preparing for a bicentennial or other anniversary observance by the Medical School, would be aided enormously if a competent Chronicler were appointed whose duty it is to keep a log book of events, activities and significant matters that do not become included in official minutes or elsewhere. Such an historical journal would surpass greatly the record that a college newspaper ordinarily establishes. The most elusive, and often valuable, material is what everyone knows at the moment but, because it is common knowledge, no one bothers to record. Equally important and fugitive are the background and specific information that the Faculty and other counselling bodies acquire but do not make a part of their proceedings.

It is a pleasure to express appreciation for aid and courtesies extended by the staffs of the Archibald Church Library, the Newberry Library, the John Crerar Library, the Chicago Historical Society and the University Archives. Additional acknowledgement is extended to Emeritus Dean James A. James, who permitted me to read his manuscript covering the general history of the University. To many unnamed persons, solicited for bits of factual detail, go my heartfelt thanks. But greatest gratitude goes to my wife, who spent countless hours in transcribing rough manuscript through
drastic revisions into its present form, and who has served ably as consultant and advisor on many matters.

For the opportunity to include pertinent quotations from books, thanks are due various publishers or individuals who hold, or held, copyrights. Page numbers refer to the locations of cited passages in this book.


N. Bridge: *The Marching Years* (Duffield and Company, New York); 52, 309, 434, 443.


J. A. D. Cooper: *Undergraduate Medical Education* (Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation); several items.

I. N. Danforth: *The Life of Nathan Smith Davis* (Cleveland Press, Chicago); 34, 68.

D. J. Davis: *History of Medical Practice in Illinois* (Illinois State Medical Society); 311.

L. Davis: *J. B. Murphy, Stormy Petrel of Surgery* (G. Putnam's Sons, New York); 516.

L. Davis: *From One Surgeon's Notebook* (C. C. Thomas, Springfield); 513-14.


J. B. Herrick: *Memories of Eighty Years* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago); 91, 154, 460.

A. E. Hertzler: *The Horse and Buggy Doctor* (Harper and Brothers, New York); 78, 127, 128, 129.

J. H. Hollister: *Memories of Eighty Years* (privately printed); 309.

B. Holmes: Opera incognita; 126, 159.


W. F. Norwood: *Medical Education in the United States Before the Civil War* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia); 115.

Magazines and local newspapers have furnished valuable reporting. Among journals, recognition is owing the Chicago Medical Examiner, Chicago Medical Journal, Medical Life, and the Magazine of Western History. Of the newspapers, most helpful were the Chicago Daily Tribune, Chicago Evening Post, Chicago Post, Press-Tribune, and Tribune.

Among the sources of information on the progress of medical education in the United States, special mention should be made of the following: Davis' History of Medical Education and Institutions in the United States (1851); Davis' Centennial Report on Medical Education to the United States Bureau of Education (1877); the series of nationwide reports issued by the Illinois State Board of Health (1880-1903); Flexner's Medical Education in the United States and Canada (1910); and Deitrich and Berson's Medical Schools in the United States at Midcentury (1953).

The assignment to trace the history of medical instruction at Northwestern resulted in the publication of a memorial Centennial volume entitled Northwestern University Medical School, 1859-1959. A Pioneer in Educational Reform. Since his nominal retirement in 1956, the writer has maintained voluntary, full-time activities in the Medical School. Because of this continuing close relationship, the Medical Administration and Alumni Association tendered an invitation to revise and extend his previous history of the School. This presented an appealing challenge since it provided an opportunity to revise, extend, rearrange and otherwise improve many portions of the original accounts, and especially to rewrite and expand the momentous period between 1920 and 1979. The result is not only an updating and extension of the previous book, but also a second thinking and elaboration on many matters and events relating to the 120 years since the Founders launched a new kind of medical college. Relatively few of the original pages remain unchanged.

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