

Directory of History of Medicine Collections

Organization Name: Adler Museum of Medicine Faculty of Health Sciences University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Organization Type: Museum

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<http://www.southafrica.net/za/en/articles/entry/article-southafrica.net-adler-museum-of-medicine>

Site:

Online Catalog:

Other:

Abstract: The Adler Museum of Medicine was founded in 1962 and was situated on the grounds of the South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg. It is now housed at the University of the Witwatersrand's Medical School Campus in Parktown, Johannesburg. The Museum reports to a Board of Control appointed by the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. In June 1974, the Museum's co-founders, Drs Cyril and Ester Adler, presented the Museum to the University of the Witwatersrand which named it the Adler Museum as a token of the esteem in which the founders were held by the University. In addition, the University bestowed the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) upon Dr. Adler and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (honoris causa) upon Mrs. Esther Adler. Until Esther Adler's death in 1982, she was the Museum's Honorary Curator while Cyril Adler acted as Honorary Director of the Museum. From 1982 Dr. Cyril Adler was appointed by the University as Director/Curator of the Adler Museum, a post he held until his death in 1988.

Holdings: The Museum contains interesting and invaluable collections depicting the history of medicine, dentistry, optometry and pharmacy through the ages. Apart from the hundreds of items of medical historical interest on display, there are also documents, sculptures, pictures, videos and philatelic and medallion collections relating to medical history as well as the history of allied health sciences. The Museum has a library of rare books and a significant history of medicine reference library. In addition, an archive arranged by subject matter is housed in the library, and biographical information relating to thousands of medical and allied health professionals, focused on South Africa, is available to students, researchers and interested members of the public. The archive also contains papers of eminent South African doctors and allied health professionals. There are reconstructions of an African herb shop, a patient consulting a sangoma (traditional healer), and a 20th century Johannesburg pharmacy, a dental surgery, a doctor's consulting room, an optometry display and a hospital operating theatre of the same period. A history of scientific medicine is augmented with displays of several alternative modalities, including homeopathy, Unani (Tibb), Chinese medicine and Ayurveda. Other attractions range from a reconstruction of patient being treated by the famous Persian physician Avicenna to an exhibition of early electro-medical equipment. A collection of rare iron lungs, many of which were used during the poliomyelitis epidemic of the early 1950s, are displayed together with succinct information about poliomyelitis. A showcase containing new acquisitions to the collection is constantly changed as donations are received. The objects displayed provide an insight into the range and diversity of the collection. In the foyer outside the Museum is a display of rare early iron lungs. Panels relating to the history of the Cradle of Humankind (Skerkfontein and environs) and a display of replicas from the site give visitors a fascinating glimpse into this world heritage site. The

Museum arranges regular public lectures, tours for students of all ages, film shows, temporary exhibitions, and provides excellent facilities for medical historical teaching and research. This includes the annual AJ Orenstein Memorial Lecture which in 2005 was delivered by Dr. Sydney Brenner, an alumnus of the University of the Witwatersrand and presently affiliated to The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, San Diego. Temporary exhibitions which complement the teaching programme of the University include the history of Malaria, Tuberculosis, Asbestosis and Advances in Cardiology. Exhibitions on Health and Health Care under Apartheid and HIV/AIDS are presently being developed and will be available as touring exhibitions in 2008. 1975 saw the inception of the Adler Museum Bulletin, the brainchild of Mrs. Rose Meltzer. Mrs. Meltzer produced the first edition single-handedly and she continued to edit it until her retirement in 1991 and was editorial consultant until her death in 1992. The Adler Museum Bulletin publishes papers in the field of historical research in medicine and allied health sciences. It appears twice a year. Recent editions appear on the Museum's website. Contributions in the form of electronic manuscripts are welcome.

Collection Subject Strengths: History of Medicine; History of Ophthalmology and Optometry; History of Pharmacology and Pharmacy; History of Stomatology

Other Collection Subject Strengths:

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