A DAY FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE AT UoFA
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME
SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2014
CLASSROOM D – 2F1.04, UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

0830 - 0900  Continental Breakfast
0900 - 0910  Greetings and Acknowledgments – Dr. D. Gilchrist
0910 – 1110  Abstracts

U.S. Public Health Service Sexually Transmitted Disease Inoculation Study
Erin Gallagher-Cohoon, undergraduate, Arts (History)
In this presentation, I analyse an important but only recently rediscovered incident in American medical history. The “U.S. Public Health Service Sexually Transmitted Disease Inoculation Study,” or the Guatemala Inoculation Study, was a human experiment undertaken between 1946 and 1948 on Guatemalan prisoners at the Central Penitentiary, mental patients at the National Mental Hospital, and soldiers of the National Army of the Revolution. With the main goal of testing various preventative treatments, American researchers injected these Guatemalan populations with syphilis, gonorrhea, and chancroid. Through the analysis of historical photographs found in the records of Dr. John C. Cutler, I explore issues of the medical representations of patients (or their body parts), and the use of patient records by historians.
To date, the Guatemala Inoculation Study has largely been told as an American story. The American researchers controlled the resources, the path that the research would take, and the findings which were to come from it. The main primary source available remains Dr. Cutler's records which are housed in an American archive, limited by American privacy laws, and known by one American researcher's name. The records have been redacted, for good reason, as a measure meant to protect the identities of the Guatemalan subjects. At the same time, by blacking out the faces of the Guatemalan subjects, the historical record has erased their individual identities. What do these medical photographs tell us about the human subjects? What do they conceal? And what or who is lost in the archive?

Ought we to mend their broken hearts? The recent history of cardiac repairs in children with Down Syndrome
Chantelle Champagne, 2nd year Pediatrics Resident
Advances in cardiac surgery for infants in the 1970s and early 1980s resulted in a series of ethical and social questions surrounding who should benefit from these procedures. The history of the treatment versus non-treatment of cardiac defects in children with Down syndrome has served as a test case for changes in the last fifty years in clinical decision making in persons with Down syndrome. During that time period, a complex social, ethical and legal evolution proved to play as important a role as the rapidly advancing surgical techniques. This paper will review the surgical history of cardiac repairs in children with Down syndrome, including their provision and outcomes. The concurrent social history will be subsequently addressed to place the historical clinical decisions in context. The multifaceted question of providing cardiac surgery to children with Down syndrome illuminates the complex process of medical decision making in a variety of persons with underlying cognitive or medical conditions.

Merissa Daborn, undergraduate, Arts (Anthropology)
From 1946 to 1958 the Marshall Islands was home to extensive US nuclear testing, which left behind a horrific health legacy. This paper examines the initial responses to the testing to see how they influenced a legacy that has spanned decades and identifies the indirect and long lasting health consequences and why they appeared. Just as crucial as to why and how these health consequences have affected the Marshallese people, is who has taken responsibility since. Focusing on the 1980s to the 2000s, this paper examines the significance of the responses, or lack thereof, from the United States and how it has contributed to the health legacies of the Marshall Islands.
Uptake of Genetic Testing – 30 Years in Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

Dahye (Jenny) Hong, 2nd year medical student

Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) is a common X-linked disorder that results in progressive neuromuscular degeneration. As advancements have been made in the field of molecular genetics over the last 30 years, methods of genetic testing have changed. With this, the attitudes of people towards genetic testing have also evolved. The 1980s ushered in the earliest clinical use of molecular genetics, and this availability was received with excitement. In the 1990s and early 2000s, genetic testing for carrier status and prenatal diagnostics for DMD came into general usage. Heightened awareness brought about the emergence of a diverse set of opinions on genetic testing – support, skepticism, caution, and voluntary choice. As the new millennium dawned, new therapies became the focus of DMD research, and the combined potential of gene therapy and early intervention with steroids and physiotherapy resulted in a push for earlier detection of DMD.

This is (Not) a Test: Human Dimensions of Open-Air Biological Weapons Tests, 1949-1969

Erin Balcom, undergraduate, Science

In the fall of 1950, eleven San Francisco residents were admitted to Berkeley Hospital with rare bacterial infections. Nearly thirty years later, a Senate subcommittee hearing revealed that the military deliberately released Serratia marcescens, a known opportunistic pathogen, from a naval ship in San Francisco Bay just days before the outbreak, which resulted in the death of Edward J. Nevin. Over the next twenty years, a court case and numerous investigations uncovered an alarming truth about the United States biological weapons program: between 1949 and 1969, the United States government covertly conducted over 200 experiments in populated American cities that exposed millions of unsuspecting civilians to bacteria and engineered particles, including a known carcinogen, in an effort to simulate full-scale biological weapons attacks. Government and military personnel have repeatedly and publicly defended the safety and ethics of the research program, insisting that the released substances were “harmless simulants”, and that their activities did not qualify as human experimentation. These claims contradict not only official project reports, but the knowledge of civilian scientists and the experiences of the exposed populations, which document the widely ignored human dimensions of the project.

A Brief History of the Use of Surgical Sutures

Kevin J. Zuo, 3rd year medical student

A suture refers to any material used to approximate and hold together the edges of biological tissue until physiological healing takes place. A multitude of options are available today for wound closure, including suture threads made of various materials, surgical staples, adhesive glues and tapes, and dermal laser bonding. However, diverse, creative suturing materials and techniques have existed for as long as humans have been able to craft tools. Acacia thorns pushed through wounds were used by East African tribes, while ancient civilizations in South America applied the jaws of ants or beetles to pince together wound edges, then twisted off the insect body to leave the head and jaws intact. The oldest known sewing needle, discovered in France, was made of bone, featured an eye, and was estimated to date 25,000 years old. As early as 3000 BC, Egyptian and Syrian references describe the use of linen and animal materials as sutures, and sutures have been recovered from an Egyptian mummy dating to 1100 BC. In India, Sushruta described the use of sutures made of flax, hemp, bark fibre, or hair in his surgical treatise, Sushruta Samhitha, in 500 BC. Absorbable catgut sutures were first recorded in 175 AD by Roman physician Galen, while sterilized sutures were pioneered by Joseph Lister in the 1860s. The 20th century ushered an era of improved needle designs and various synthetic sutures that were easier to handle, caused less tissue reaction, and reduced post-operative infection rates. These include Prolene, Vicryl, PDS, and Monocryl.

1110-1130 Coffee Break

1130-1230 AMS Guest Speaker Dr. John Waller, Assoc. Prof HOM, Michigan State U

Making Biological Hierarchies: Patterns in the History of “Them-and-Us” Distinctions

1230 Awards and Close

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Associated Medical Services, Inc.; Alberta Medical Foundation
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