



Minute book of the Guild of Barber Surgeons showing the signature of Michael Kearney as Master in 1726. TCD MS 1447/8/2 folio 45r



List of medicines prepared by an apothecary. Late 17th century. Italian and Latin. TCD MS 11187 folio 3r

### Case 1 & 2 INTRODUCTION

The unregulated practice of medicine in Ireland, and the poor standard of training of Irish practitioners caused concern in the 17th century. In 1660 John Stearne (1624-69), fellow and registrar of Trinity College, proposed the setting up of the Fraternity of Physicians, as a daughter college of Trinity, leasing a former prison to house this new body. The prison, Trinity Hall, had been taken over by the College as student accommodation. The Fraternity of Physicians became the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, which eventually became independent of Trinity College.

The year 1711 was an important landmark in the history of the Trinity School of Physic. The building of the Anatomy House, and the appointment of lecturers in anatomy, botany and chemistry, meant that the College now provided instruction for medical students within its walls. The site of the new building, the old physic garden, was approximately where the Berkeley Library now stands. The Anatomy House contained a chemical laboratory, a lecture room, a dissecting room and a museum.

### Case 3 BARBER SURGEONS & APOTHECARIES

Physicians were originally the only medical practitioners to have a university education. Surgeons, long considered to be of inferior social status, were originally trained by apprenticeship. They struggled to free themselves from an historic association with the Guild of Barbers, who were the first medical practitioners in Ireland to be incorporated, or formally recognised. The Guild received a royal charter in 1446 and expanded to include the surgeons, the wig-makers and the apothecaries. Apothecaries, the forerunners of modern-day pharmacists, were for many years the doctors for the poor who could not afford to consult a physician. Even among the better-off, self-reliance in medical matters was necessary as trained doctors were neither easily accessible, outside of towns, nor were they yet seen to be entirely reliable.

### Case 4 & 5 ANATOMY

By 1750 the teaching of anatomy in the College was unorganised, and student numbers had dwindled, principally because of the difficulty in obtaining cadavers upon which to practise. It was against the law to dissect any but executed criminals and this led to the notorious practices of body-snatching and grave-robbing. George Clegghorn (1716-89), who had studied in Edinburgh, was elected anatomist in Trinity College in 1753. His skill, and the fact that he lectured in English rather than the more usual Latin, proved very popular. Nonetheless numbers again fell towards the end of the century, partly due to the competition offered by the new



John Gerard, *Great Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London 1797). Frontispiece showing the author holding the potato plant. Gerard was the first to describe this plant in English



John Gerard, *Great Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London 1797), p 507

College of Surgeons which was founded in 1784. In 1805 there were 35 students in the Medical School, only five of whom were studying practical anatomy.

The work of James Macartney (1770-1843), John Cheyne (1777-1836) and Abraham Colles (1773-1843), laid the foundations for what came to be known as the Irish school of medicine. Macartney was appointed to the professorship of surgery and anatomy in Trinity in 1813. He was a gifted teacher and a skilled anatomist. His work had a profound impact on men such as William Stokes (1804-78) and Robert Graves (1796-1853) who were to draw international attention to Dublin by their discoveries and practices.

A new medical building was erected in 1825, the first since the 1711 Anatomy House, to accommodate the increased numbers of students attracted to Macartney's classes. The remains of Macartney's medical building forms part of the current Anatomy Museum which houses an impressive collection of exhibits and teaching aids. It includes the skeleton of the Irish giant Cornelius Magrath (1736-1760), whose corpse had been 'snatched' by Trinity medical students. The Anatomy Department is soon to move to the new biomedical sciences building, which has been under construction since 2008, and the Anatomy Museum faces an uncertain future.

Anatomical museums continue to contribute to medical research: scientists find it valuable to compare human remains, which predate the invention of particular substances, with modern bones. Cornelius Magrath's DNA is being included in a nation-wide study of the occurrence of forms of gigantism.

### Case 6 BOTANY

The need to understand the medicinal properties of plants made the study of botany an integral part of the medical curriculum and a botanical garden was a necessary teaching support. In 1687 the Board of the College decided that 'the kitchin garden should be made a Physick garden'. Over the centuries Trinity has had four gardens; the 1806 garden, in Ballsbridge, was moved to its current position in Dartry in the 1960s. The chair of botany was separated from that of physic in 1800.

### Case 7 DENTISTRY, CHEMISTRY

Dentistry was originally undertaken by self-taught practitioners and by those who underwent an apprenticeship in the Guild of Barber-Surgeons until the dissolution of that body in the 1840s. The first Dublin Dental Hospital opened in 1876 to provide treatment for the poor and training for students. A number of Trinity men were associated with it from its foundation, such as Samuel Haughton (1821-97),



J. Hutchinson *Illustrations of Clinical Surgery* (London 1878-88)



Death mask of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) dean of St Patrick's Cathedral and author. TCD Misc Objects Swift death mask

registrar of the medical faculty in Trinity College, who served on the governing committee. In 1889, the hospital moved from York Street to its present home in Lincoln Place, behind Trinity College. In 1909 the College established a teaching school of dentistry.

The first lectureship in chemistry was established with the founding of the School of Physic in 1711. Physician and chemist Robert Perceval (1756-1839) was appointed to the lectureship in chemistry in Trinity in 1782 and persuaded the College that the post should be a professorship rather than a lectureship. As in the case of botany, the formal recognition of chemistry as an intellectual discipline distinct from medicine was not realised until the 19th century.

### Case 8 & 9 GOLDEN AGE

The 19th century was the golden age of Irish medicine. This period produced giants of international medicine such as Robert Graves and William Stokes. Improvements were made in education with the provision of medical teaching in the new Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork and Galway. Clinical practice altered under the influence of new science, the application of modern technology and the recognition that continual research was the keystone upon which modern medicine would advance. It was an intense period of development, much of it centred on the Meath Hospital, founded in 1753.

Robert Graves graduated from Trinity in 1818. He changed the location of learning from the lecture theatre to the patients' bedside, thereby transforming clinical teaching throughout the English-speaking world. The stethoscope was introduced to the Meath by Graves' close friend and colleague William Stokes and the bi-aural stethoscope was invented by Stokes' student in the Meath, Arthur Leared (1822-79). The inventor of the hypodermic syringe, Trinity graduate Francis Rynd (1801-61), also worked in the Meath Hospital. Among the many innovations credited to surgeon John Cheyne (1777-1836), his guidance for nurses, whom he personally supervised in the Meath Hospital, may mark the beginning of formalised nursing education in Ireland and Britain.

### Case 10 PSYCHIATRY

People who were considered to be lunatics were harshly treated, often to the point of being tortured. Terrorising the patients was believed by some practitioners to be effective, as was extreme physical agitation. It was not until the 19th century that serious efforts were made to move towards more humane treatments. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) made several unsuccessful attempts to establish a hospital for the insane poor during his lifetime. Ireland's first hospital for the insane, St Patrick's, was founded with Swift's bequest, in 1757.



Portrait of surgeon Abraham Colles (1773-1843). Print. TCD MS 4726/13



Portrait of James Macartney (1770-1843). Print. TCD MS 4726/8



Drawing, from a photograph, of an exposed brain, by medical artist S.Sewell. Early 20th century. TCD MUN MED 24

### Case 11 HOSPITALS

The 18th century is notable for the growth of the voluntary hospitals in Dublin. The population of Dublin increased during the century and the squalid living conditions of the poor facilitated the spread of disease. There were no hospital facilities for the sick in the early part of the century; the establishment of voluntary hospitals was due partly to individual benevolence, but it was also necessary to protect public health from the likelihood of epidemics emerging from the slums.

The Charitable Infirmary, the first voluntary hospital in Ireland or Great Britain, opened in 1728. In 1733 Dr Steevens' Hospital 'for the curable poor', founded by Richard (c. 1654-1710) and Grizelle Steevens (c. 1654-1747), accepted its first patient. In 1734 Mary Mercer (fl. 1734) set up a trust for the founding of Mercer's Hospital treating 'diseases of tedious and hazardous cure such as falling sickness, lunacy [and] leprosy'.

The Rotunda Hospital founded in 1745 by Laois-born obstetrician Bartholomew Mosse (1712-59), was the first lying-in or maternity hospital established in Ireland or Great Britain. It was also the first hospital in Ireland to undertake training in midwifery. Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, founded in 1809, was the first hospital in Ireland specifically commissioned as a university teaching hospital.

### Case 12 SURGERY

Other key figures in the golden age of Irish medicine were Abraham Colles (1773-1843), and Dominic Corrigan (1802-80). Colles, professor of surgery in the Royal College of Surgeons, made a conscious effort to improve the prestige of medicine in Ireland. He reformed and extended surgical instruction and, more than anyone else, made the surgical profession respectable.

Dominic Corrigan (1802-80) came under the influence of James Macartney, in Trinity College. He published many original observations including work on aortic incompetence and pulmonary fibrosis. The RCPI, under Corrigan's presidency, was the first such college in Ireland or Britain to admit women to the licence examination.

The first surgery under aesthetic in Ireland was performed in 1847 in the Richmond Hospital by John MacDonnell (1796-1892), assisted by Robert Adams (1791-1875), mere months after its first demonstration in Boston. Prior to the use of anaesthesia, physical restraints and the speed of the surgeon had been the patients' principal salvation.

*Continued overleaf >>*



Sketch by Edith Somerville (1858–1959) of a patient receiving treatment at the Pasteur anti-rabies clinic in Paris in 1886. TCD MS 4274b/4



Dorothy Price (1890–1954) who introduced BCG as a treatment for tuberculosis in Ireland. TCD MS 7534/5



Portable medical supplies. Early 20th century. TCD MS 11326

### Case 13 GERM THEORY

When microscopes were introduced in the late 17th-century, allowing micro-organisms to be seen for the first time, some scientists began to question traditional beliefs regarding the origin and spread of disease. Previously, scientists believed in spontaneous generation, that is, that diseases (and other life forms) could spring from inanimate sources. Another two centuries were to pass before scientists, such as French chemist Louis Pasteur (1822–95), and Prussian physician Robert Koch (1843–1910), conclusively established the germ theory of disease.

John Houston (1802–45) was the first doctor to employ a microscope in medicine in Ireland, in the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, in 1844. Houston was also the first in Ireland to use the newly developed theories of the cell in the human organism to diagnose or explain disease, particularly in relation to cancer. When he presented his observations to the Surgical Society of Ireland in 1844, the concept was so novel that he had to begin with a basic description of the structure of a cell.

### Case 14 20TH CENTURY AND BEYOND

Clinical teaching in early 20th-century Dublin continued at several small hospitals, each of which had strong traditions of teaching and service, producing very competent generalists. By the 1950s, however, the need for amalgamation and the concentration of facilities became increasingly urgent if benefit was to be derived from modern hospital developments. In 1971 the Board of the newly created St James' Hospital in Dublin met for the first time. In 1980 construction began on the new St James' Hospital and in 1994 the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences at St James' opened. In 2000 the Trinity Centre in the Adelaide & Meath Hospital, Dublin incorporating the National Children's Hospital, opened.

### Further reading

Davis Coakley, *Irish Masters of Medicine* (Dublin 1992).  
Elizabeth Malcolm and Greta Jones (eds.), *Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland 1650–1940* (Cork UP 1999).



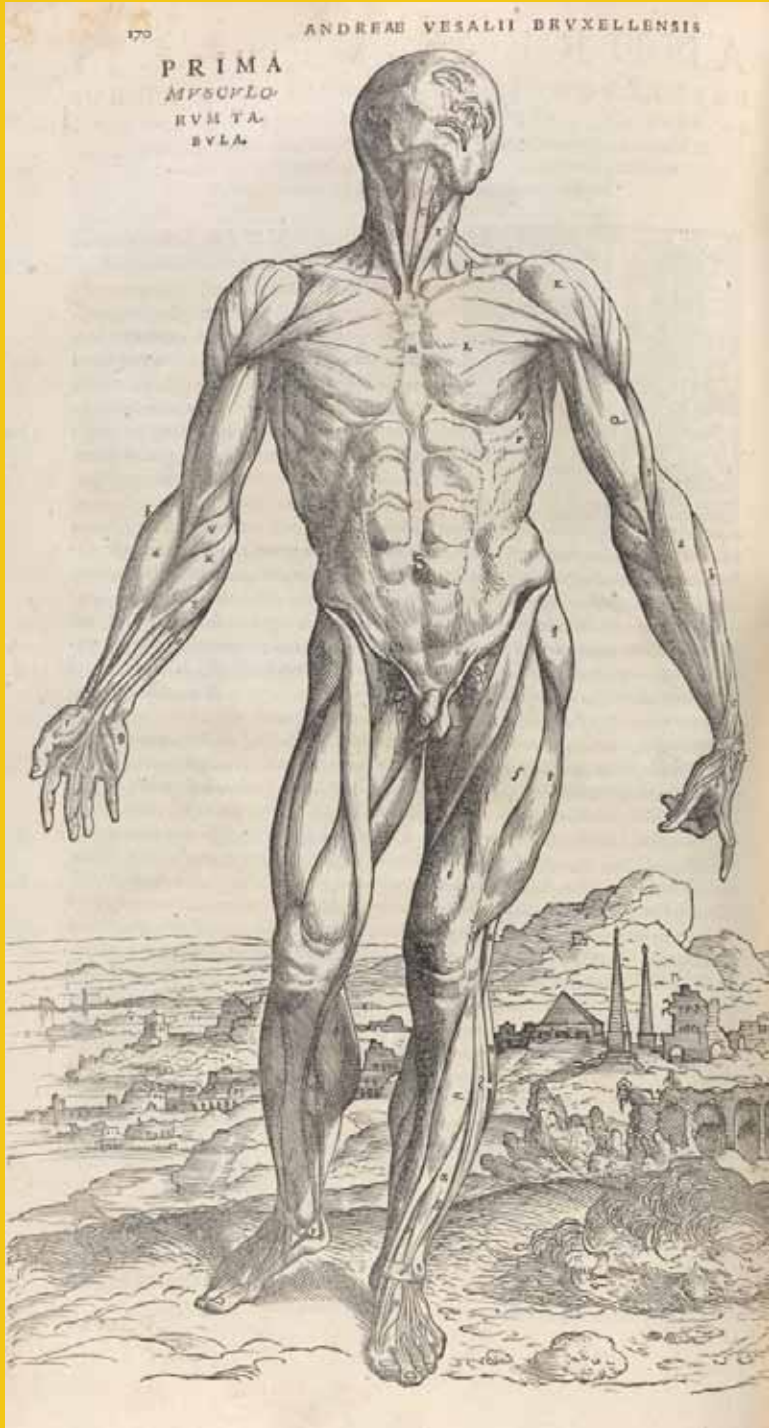
19th-century microscope from the Meath Hospital.



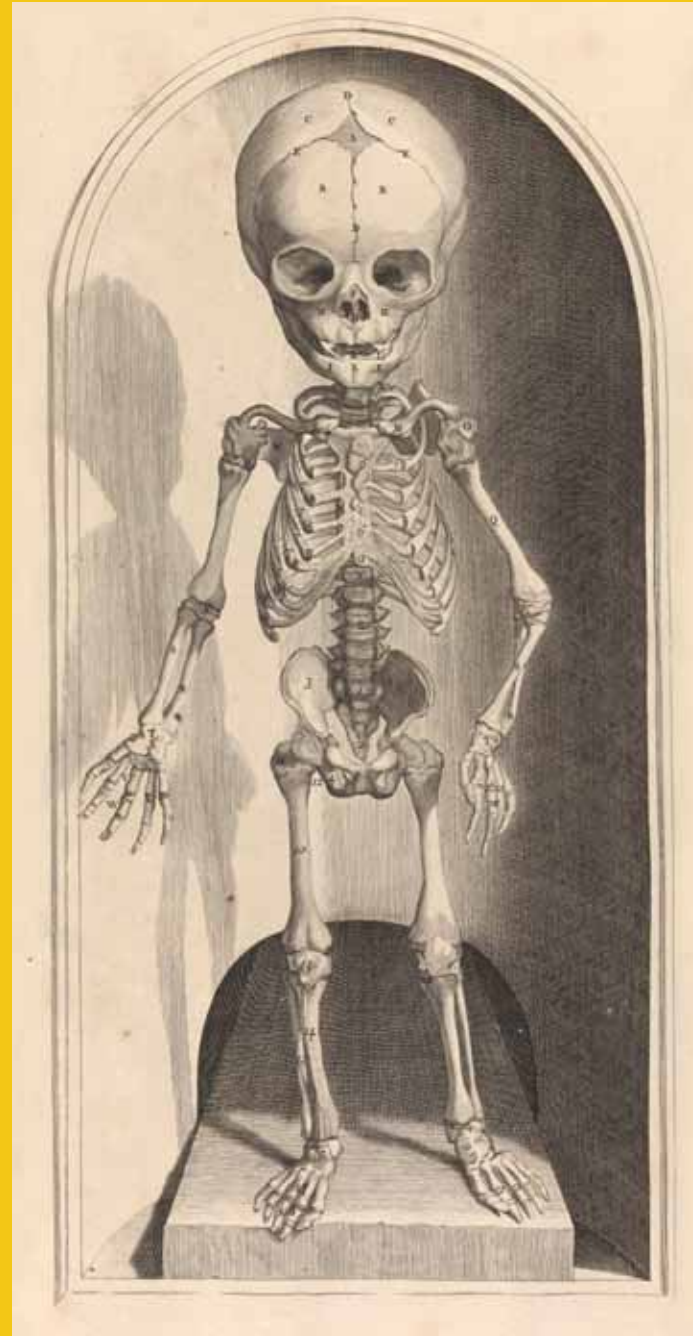
G. Bidloo, *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (Amsterdam 1685)



Detail of Dublin city, showing the College and Trinity Hall, from a map of Leinster by John Speed (1552–1629), 1610. TCD MS 1209/7



A. Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrici* (Basel 1543)



G. Bidloo, *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (Amsterdam 1685)

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**“The best doctors in the world are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet and Dr Merryman”**  
Jonathan Swift

# THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE 1711–2011

EXHIBITION GUIDE

7 April – 2 October 2011 The Long Room, Trinity College Library Dublin