The History of Modern Biomedicine
Research Group:
who we are, what we do, and how and why we do it...

Originally presented to QMUL School of History, December 2011
Funding from the Wellcome Trust

• 2010-2015: £709,000 Fellowship
  “Witnesses to twentieth century medicine”

• 2012-2017: £1,410,000 Strategic Award “Makers of modern biomedicine: testimonies and legacy”
Some past Witness Seminars

- Haemophilia
- MRSA
- Peptic ulcer
- Maternal care
- Cervical screening
- Clinical pharmacology
- Cystic fibrosis
- TB chemotherapy
- Common Cold Unit
- NMR & MRI
- Heart transplant in UK
- Obstetric ultrasound
- Psychiatric drugs
- Pain management
- Cholesterol
- Prenatal corticosteroids

http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed/wellcome_witnesses/index.html
Themes of strategic award

clinical genetics
neurosciences
global health & infectious diseases
biomedical engineering
research ethics & practice
Our advisory board contains experts in all these areas, and representatives of several historical and scientific organisations.
Some witness seminar participants
http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed/wellcome_witnesses/index.html
What is a Witness Seminar

Advances in medical science and medical practice throughout the twentieth century, and especially after the Second World War, have proceeded at such a pace, and with such an intensity, that they provide new and genuine challenges to historians. Scientists and clinicians themselves frequently bemoan the rate at which published material proliferates in their disciplines, and the near impossibility of 'keeping up with the literature'. Pity, then, the poor historian, trying to make sense of this mass of published data, scouring archives for unpublished accounts and illuminating details, and attempting throughout to comprehend, contextualize, reconstruct and convey to others the stories of the recent past and their significance. The extensive published record of modern medicine and medical science raises

Clinical pharmacology in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s was an exciting profession. Many important new drugs were developed and brought to market and a more systematic knowledge of drug effects in humans was needed, as well as ensuring the safety and efficacy of new and existing drugs, especially following the unexpected problems arising from the use of thalidomide. This Witness Seminar followed an earlier meeting on the history of the general development of clinical pharmacology and focuses on the development of clinical pharmacology in pharmaceutical companies and drug regulation. Professor Rod Flower chaired the meeting of clinical pharmacologists and others who shaped the discipline, which discussed the main centres of influence; the attraction to clinical pharmacologists of working in industry; whether the decline in the number of academic clinical pharmacologists was paralleled in drug companies; what drove drug regulation; and the relationships between companies and regulatory authorities.

Participants included Dr Jeffrey Aronson, Professor Nigel Baber, Sir Alasdair Breckenridge, Sir Iain Chalmers, Professor Joe Collier, Professor Donald Davies, Dr Peter Fletcher, Dr Arthur Fowle, Professor Sir Charles George, Professor David Grahame-Smith, Professor John Griffin, Dr Andrew Herxheimer, Professor Ray Hill, Dr Peter Lewis, Dr Tim Mant, Professor Denis McDevitt, Professor Michael Orme, Dr Anthony Peck, Professor Brian Prichard, Professor Sir Michael Rawlins, Professor John Reid, Professor Philip Routledge, Dr Julian Shelley, Dr Robert Smith, Professor Cameron Swift, Professor Tilli Tansey, Dr Duncan Vere, and the late Professor Owen Wade.
Ethel Bidwell from ‘Haemophilia’

http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed/wellcome_witnesses/volume04/index.html
Tom Brown from ‘Obstetric Ultrasound’

http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed/wellcome_witnesses/volume05/index.html
Recording laboratory technicians

http://rsnr.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/62/1/77.full.pdf+html
Today’s Neuroscience – Tomorrow’s History

Neuroscience has been one of the key areas of biomedical science that the Wellcome Trust has fostered and sponsored for nearly 60 years – in fact the very first ‘fellowship’ grant awarded by the Wellcome Trust in 1937 was to Otto Loewi, who shared the 1936 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Sir Henry Dale for their work on the elucidation of chemical neurotransmission.

The Wellcome Trust has recently funded a research project directed by Professor Till Tannay (UCL) and Professor Les Bannister (Oxford) to record interviews with prominent neuroscientists, with the aim of providing resources about contemporary neuroscience for the use of present and future historians, as well as journalists, policy makers etc. Simultaneously the potential to engage young neuroscientists with their own history is offered and some of the material generated by this work will be used for more general educational outreach activities.

http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed/neuroscience-history/index.html
Other Projects

http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Publications/Reports/Biomedical-science/

Portfolio Review

Human Functional Brain Imaging
1990–2009
September 2011

Portfolio Review

Malaria
1990–2009
April 2012
Everything is deposited and catalogued in the Wellcome Library

http://catalogue.wellcome.ac.uk/  Wellcome Library Archives & Manuscripts GC/253
Outputs

Advisory Board

Consultant advisers, interviewees & interviewers

History of Modern Biomedicine Research Group

Witness Seminars

Symposia, exhibitions etc

Social networks, Facebook, Twitter etc

Academic publications, grant applications etc

Downloadable .pdfs, YouTube clips, iTunes U, podcasts etc

Print-on-demand volumes

Catalogued archives

Print & online media, popular press, broadcast media etc

‘Blogosphere’ wellcomelibrary, blogspot etc

etc
To listen to an audio podcast about the Makers of Modern Biomedicine Project Wellcome Trust Strategic Award, please go to:
http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/research/modbiomed.Audio/grant_podcast/73229.mp3