Apothecaries' Hall—Promoting the History, Philosophy, and Ethics of Medicine and Pharmacy for 60 Years

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Published online: 20 November 2019
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The Society of Apothecaries is a livery company based in the City of London, UK, located in a Jacobean building (Apothecaries' Hall) rebuilt after the Great Fire of London in 1666. The Society celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2017; it was founded with the principal aim of regulating the practice of making and selling medicines. Originally its members were only permitted to make and dispense medicines, not to prescribe; but after a landmark legal case in 1703–1704 (the 'Rose case'), apothecaries were permitted to prescribe, and over the years their role evolved into that of today's family practitioners [1].

In 1815, the Society also gained the right to grant licences to practise medicine, a right still existing but currently not exercised. However, diplomas continue to be awarded in several specialty medical subjects.

Laboratories for the formulation and manufacture of medicines (originally botanical, later chemicals also) were established in 1623 and continued working until 1922. From 1673 until 1983 the Society maintained a garden in Chelsea, London, for the study of botany and the production of herbs and medicinal plants, the 'Chelsea Physic Garden' [2]; although this is now run as an independent charity, the Society maintains close links with it and provides one of the twelve trustees.

In the 20th century, the Society became increasingly involved in public engagement, and in 1953, the Master of the Society, W. S. C. Copeman, drafted a memo "On a Faculty of Historical Medicine", and initiated a series of eponymous lectures, broadly on historical topics in medicine and pharmacy, which have always been open to the general public at no charge. In 1959, the Society established a 'Faculty of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy', which this year is celebrating its 60th ('Diamond') anniversary [3]. In 1978,

the Faculty formally included the philosophy and ethics of healthcare within its remit.

An annual history of medicine course leading to an optional diploma (by examination) was started in 1970, and a similar course in the philosophy of medicine began in 1978. In addition, the Faculty runs regular short courses in history of medicine and history of pharmacy and one-day symposia on various topics.

The Faculty continues to run the annual series of eponymous lectures on topics relating to the history and ethics of medicine and pharmacy. It also nominates suitable candidates to be 'Apothecaries lecturers' in medical schools across the UK and currently also in Australia and Dubai, to engage with students on medical history, philosophy, and ethics.

A number of past and present pharmaceutical company employees are members of the Society and/or the Faculty, which together form a natural home for anyone interested in the history of medicines and pharmacy, and ethical issues in the development and prescription of new medicines.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Funding No sources of funding were used to support the writing of this Editorial.

Conflict of interest Noel Snell has no relevant financial interests. He is a member of the executive committee of the Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Society of Apothecaries.

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