

Free Hospital for Women Scrapbook

This scrapbook is part of the Harvard University Library's collection on "Working Women, 1800-1930," which is itself part of the Open Collections Program. The print version is located at the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine. It contains information about the hospital, including articles from newspapers, magazines, and other publications; photographs of the hospital, employees, and special events; lecture announcements; letters and other forms of correspondence; ration cards; tickets; forms; certificates; posters; programs; and playbills. The following is a selection of scrapbook components relevant to embryology. However, because of the length of the scrapbook, other entries may provide insight for future research endeavors. References point to particular pages in the scrapbook.

Throughout the scrapbook, there are numerous clippings from various media sources. On 6 December 1939, the Science Service announced the opening of the Carnegie Institution of Washington exhibit of human embryos in Washington DC (97). Scattered throughout the book are various articles discussing in vitro fertilization (125), including newspaper clippings about movie actress Merle Oberon's infertility operation that John Charles Rock performed. A later clipping states that Oberon and her husband planned to adopt, implying that the surgery was not a success (133). On page 139 an article entitled "Insufficient Research Hampers Treatment of Infertile Women" appears next to a clipping in the "Hollywood" section announcing the presence of Rock and his wife at the home of Oberon. This leaves open the question about whether other celebrities sought Rock's infertility treatments.

In addition to the scattered discussions of in vitro fertilization throughout the collection, there are a few articles announcing scientific discoveries, such as an article on Arthur Hertig and Rock entitled "Isolation of 3 ½ Day Old Embryo Revealed by Two Harvard Doctors" (140) and articles on George Van S. and Olive Watkins Smith's work on pregnancy toxemia (8217).

While there are many photographs in the scrapbook, few have captions or other forms of identification. However, there is a scattering of photos that depict scientists and physicians relevant to embryology and reproductive biology. On page 101, a lab photograph of Hertig appears; page 136 contains photos of various physicians, including Rock and Hertig whose names are referenced on page 135; and images of George and Olive Smith can be found on page 145.

During the time frame in which the scrapbook was created, numerous lectures captured the innovation in reproductive research (108, 116, 128, 132). Hertig, Rock, Smith, and Frank Pemberton were especially prominent scientists in the scrapbook and their lectures are referred to in the aforementioned pages. Page 144 contains an agenda for the "Conference on Menstruation and Its Disorders," and an announcement of the First Annual Conference of the American Society for the Study of Sterility can be found on page 145.

In addition to news articles, photographs, and lecture announcements, the scrapbook contains a vast number of miscellaneous clippings. On page 103 there is a light-hearted, type-written poem about Hertig's work with human ova and mentions George L. Streeter, Carnegie, and Harvard. On page 110 there is an announcement of the appointment of the first dietician at the Free Hospital for Women; this brings up the question of when nutrition was deemed an important component to both fertility, alleviation of disease, and overall health. Finally, page 131 contains a list of fertility clinics found in Massachusetts.

This is only a sampling of the over 250 pages found in the scrapbook. Other components of the book may also prove useful but require a page-by-page examination since there is no search option. While

it appears to contain valuable information regarding embryology, particularly the social contexts surrounding such topics as in vitro fertilization, little is known about its origins, such as when and why it was created, who compiled the documents, and what criteria were used to select the components. Further research is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the book itself, the Free Hospital for Women, and the research conducted therein.

Sources

1. Harvard University Library. "Women Working, 1800-1930." Open Collections Program. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/allmanuscripts.html> (Accessed 9 November 2007).
2. Harvard University Library Page Delivery Service. "Free Hospital for Women. Scrapbook. Free Hospital for Women Records. Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine." Call Number: MC 915. <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/3071160?n=1&res=3&imagesize=1200> (Accessed 9 November 2007).