



# AAHM

American  
Association *for the*  
History of  
Medicine

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2025

## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MARY FISSELL



### Happy late summer!

I know that many of us are scrambling to upload syllabi or sort out last-minute registration issues... or are already in full swing of the semester or seeing a stream of patients. So thanks for taking a minute to read this.

When I was preparing for the Boston meeting, I was reminded of why organizations like ours matter. We are living in extraordinary times; almost every day I see something on the front pages of the *New York Times* that either draws on the kind of historical knowledge that we specialize in – or should have drawn upon it. At the same time, I hear various expressions of hopelessness about the role of societies such as ours. People ask “why bother?”

At the risk of being preachy, let me say a few words about why we matter. We’re a tiny group – some 750 members. And we’re certainly not perfect, we’re a work in progress. But it is institutions like ours that help to provide the necessary interstitial tissue of intellectual life: believing that ideas matter, that careful attention to facts and evidence matters, that decency matters.

Despite the chaos and destructiveness that we live in right now, I call upon us to sustain our commitments to these values, to continue to support one another, sharing research, mentoring the next generation, fighting to try to sustain that generation, offering the most honest witness to our past that we are able to produce. When a small group of physicians got together in Atlantic City 100 years ago, they probably did not envision the trials that lay ahead, any more than we can foresee what the next years – indeed, the next days – will bring. But we are stronger together than apart.

In Boston, the buzz of conversations — new scholars meeting people whose work they had read, congratulations offered on a recent book or article, tentative framings of new projects, old friends catching up — reminded all of us about why we want to meet in person. Standing in line for a drink, or taking a bus to the Garrison, or any number of other chance encounters can make for conversations that are unexpected gifts.

So I hope to see you in Buffalo next June — yes, we are meeting later, no blue books on airplanes this time! For the illustration, I’ve chosen an image of an alehouse from a seventeenth-century ballad — early modernists might be thinking of coffeehouses as the model sites of sociability, but those were often all male. At least we see a woman in this picture!

# Federal Employees and Contractors Oral History Project



Civil servants and federal contractors have long played a crucial role in keeping the U.S. government running and serving the American public. Beginning in January 2025, federal employees and contractors across the United States have experienced profound and rapid changes. Federal agencies have faced widespread disruptions. Tens of thousands of civil servants have been laid off, and numerous government contracts have been canceled. These changes have impacted individuals, families, communities, and the delivery of public services.

One of those federal employees is Jason M. Chernesky (AAHM member since 2012), who served as the historian for the FDA. On 14 February 2025, he was terminated by DOGE and put on administrative leave. Responding to his own termination and the broader changes occurring in the federal workforce, Jason began an oral history project to capture the lived experiences, institutional knowledge, and contributions of federal employees and contractors. In March 2025, the Organization of American Historians became the institutional home for, and officially launched, the Federal Employees and Contractors Oral History Project (FECOHP). The OAH and the FECOHP gained start-up support from the Volcker Alliance for the project.

In August, OAH and FECOHP were awarded a \$852,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to build this oral history archive over the next three years. More info about the funding grant can be found here. The FECOHP aims to collect 300 to 500 oral histories over this period. These interviews will serve as a vital resource for historians, policymakers, educators, and the public—offering insight into the essential work conducted by the federal workforce and how their efforts have strengthened the nation, while simultaneously capturing this important historical moment as it unfolds.

# HISTORY OF MEDICINE WEEK RETURNS!

October 6-10, 2025

History of Medicine Week is coming next month! Mark your calendars for Oct 6-10 to ensure you don't miss one of the virtual events AAHM and CHSTM will host each day. As we did last year, we are seeking to demonstrate the value of the history of medicine to a larger audience. Our panels will connect current-day events with their longer histories. We're also inviting our membership to bolster their skills in public communication (through writing op-eds or interviewing with media) and teaching while universities are under attack. Keep checking [our website](#) for registration information as it becomes available.

## Our events will include:

**Monday, October 6 at 12 CST:** "Communicating Beyond the Academy: Historians, the Media, and the Public"

**Tuesday, October 7:** Release of a podcast recording of "Federal Regulations: Progressive Era and Beyond"

**Wednesday, October 8 at 3 CST:** "Teaching as the University Burns: Practical Tips" (AAHM members only event)

**Thursday, October 9 at 2 CST:** "Medicine Crossing Borders: Immigration and Health"

**Friday, October 10th at 3 CST:** "Trans and Intersex Health from Past to Future"

CHSTM has graciously agreed to again provide all technical support. We hope that you can join us at one or all of these events! For more information, contact Education & Outreach chair Scottie Buehler at [scottiecpm@shsu.edu](mailto:scottiecpm@shsu.edu).



Scottie Buehler is a midwife turned historian of medicine who teaches at Sam Houston State University. She situates her research at the nexus of the medicine, gender studies, material culture, and eighteenth-century France. She is the chair of the AAHM Education and Outreach Committee for 2025-2026.

Are you hosting an event on your campus during History of Medicine week? Share the details with us and we'll add to our calendar of events!





# Can you spare \$9.45 for a cup of joe?

In my years of attending AAHM as a graduate student, I generally managed to survive on the “free” food caddged from breakfast, snacks, and receptions at the meeting. I’m sure I was not alone in snagging a breakfast bagel and banana for my lunch then, nor that graduate student meeting navigation strategies have changed much over the years. As AAHM and our peer associations try to figure out how to make meetings more affordable, reducing the amount of food and beverages provided is one of the controversial measures on the table. Caffeine can be a necessity for enthusiastic attention in paper sessions. So just how much does that cup of conference coffee really cost?

An 8 oz. cup of brewed coffee at the coffeeshop in Minnesota’s student union building is about \$3.25 with tax and tip. If I order beverages for an all-day conference on campus (coffee, tea, and a small number of canned drinks for breakfast plus two breaks), the cost is \$19 per person, delivered to the meeting room. In Boston, not a cheap date city, the Sheraton charged \$151.25 (including tip but not the cost of paper cups) for one gallon of coffee or tea, expected to serve 16 people with 8 oz. of life-giving beverage. Total cost for one little cup of java: \$9.45. Buffalo will seem like a bargain at a mere \$4.77 per 8 oz.

I drink my coffee without sugar but am addicted to an accompanying sweet snack. At my self-service campus conference, that breaktime snack costs \$8.75 per person (apples slices, celery, and Nutella choices in addition to cookies), or at the very cheapest, \$19/dozen (\$50 minimum) for the mundane cookies on offer at every campus event. Even historians can do basic math; I know you all are thinking “well, go buy some power bars at the grocery instead.” It’s true that a Kind bar from Target would cost only 90 cents, but there are a few obstacles to getting that Kind bar into your hand alongside your coffee. For my self-service conference, someone must go to the store to buy dozens of boxes of Kind bars and napkins, transport them to the meeting site, arrange them on a table, clean up the trash at the end, and turn in the receipts with an attached hospitality form listing all attendees and their University affiliation for reimbursement.

That would work in a few campus buildings, but in most conference-suitable spaces, we’re not allowed to bring in outside food: we have to use the University-approved caterer, the one that charges \$8.75 per person for snack service (and polices the trash for evidence of outside drink cans). Similarly, we can’t just bring in gallon jugs of coffee and Kind bars at AAHM’s conference hotel. The rooms we use for our sessions and events at the annual meetings are generally “comped” by the hotel based on spending a contracted amount on food and beverage at the hotel and filling a block of hotel rooms. For the self-service conference at my own university, I’d also have to pay a \$400 fee per day for each room used.

Boston’s Local Arrangements Committee creatively included excellent chocolate bars and salty snacks in our tote bags—a far cheaper alternative to a hotel-supplied afternoon snack. I will be packing for Buffalo with peanut butter crackers and Unreal candy bars in my bookbag, not too sad that celery is just too perishable to make the trip.

If you’d like to impress your colleagues and bring a compact historical snack to future meetings, you can go on Ebay and purchase a “Complete Edible USA K Rations WWII Reproduction Morale Version” featuring Peter Paul’s “Choclettos,” Wrigley’s chewing gum, Chesterfield cigarettes, and synthetic lemon juice powder for the discount price of \$79.99. Order yours now and save it for Buffalo.



**Jennifer Gunn** is associate professor of History at the University of Minnesota. She is a historian of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century medicine focused on the intersections of health, medicine, biology, social science, institution and public policy. She is the chair of the Annual Meetings Committee. Thanks to Carly Spiewak for Boston and Buffalo numbers.

# AAHM-Gale Fellows, 2025-2026

**Francis Newman** is a PhD candidate in Harvard's History of Science Department. With this fellowship, Francis is looking forward to studying medical meteorology, a mid-nineteenth century attempt to understand the relationship between disease and climate using atmospheric instruments and weather data. He asks how European and American physicians established a colonial knowledge network that attempted to understand disease meteorologically, and in particular, how Chinese environments shaped the credibility of these medical meteorological observations.



**Bethany L. Johnson, Ph.D.** is an Affiliate Faculty in the Health & Medical Humanities program and the Department of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Johnson's project for the AAHM Gale Digital Fellowship is a comparative study examining the post-viral health consequences of the 1890s influenza pandemic and the 1918 influenza pandemic. Johnson will investigate how doctors and patients perceived themselves and their health following infection, how media sources, such as newspapers, reported survivor experiences, and which medical problems emerged in the aftermath of both outbreaks. communication in the present.

**Elisabeth M. Yang, Ph.D.** is a senior postdoctoral research fellow and Wellcome Trust Fellow at the Centre for History and Philosophy of Science in the School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science at the University of Leeds. For the AAHM-Gale DH fellowship, Dr. Yang will draw from digitized collections and sources as well as reinforce digital humanities theories and tools to further investigate the theoretical and practical figurations of the idealized "happy and healthy baby" and the imagined "moral baby" in American childrearing, medical, and scientific discourses from the 1850s-1920s.



Thanks to a partnership with Gale, we were delighted to fund three digital humanities projects spearheaded by our members. This one-time opportunity gives us the chance to support innovative digital research by graduate students and early-career scholars. We can't wait to see where these projects go!

# Updates from AAHM

## Committee Chairs, 2025-2026

**Annual Meetings:** Jennifer Gunn

**Student Affairs,** Jessica Hester and Sarah  
Bernstein

**Diversity and Inclusion:** Mariola Espinosa

**Education and Outreach:** Scottie Buehler

**Nominations:** Andrew Hogan

**Publications:** Emily Bowlus-Peck

**Estes Prize:** Martha Gardner

**Garrison Lecture:** Aimee Medeiros

**Genevieve Miller Lifetime Award:** Jim  
Downs

**Rosen Prize:** Wayne Soon

**Welch Medal:** Emily Baum

**Osler Medal:** Nandini Bhattacharya

**Shryock Medal:** Merlin Chowkwanyun

**Pressman-Burroughs Wellcome Early  
Career:** Kylie Smith

**Finance Committee:** Evan Elizabeth Hart

**Travel Grants:** Felicity Turner

**Local Arrangements:** David Herzberg

**Program Committee:** Rana Hogarth and  
Jacob Steere-Williams

## Call for Papers Coming Soon!

The call for papers for AAHM 2026 will be circulated soon! The Program Committee, chaired by Rana Hogarth and Jacob Steere-Williams, have been hard at work planning the shape of the meeting. This year we are in Buffalo, where last we met in 1996.

There are a number of innovations this year. We are excited to meet jointly with the American Association for the History of Nursing! There will be both parallel and joint programming. And, following feedback from our members, we are meeting in June rather than May. Save the date: **June 4-7, 2026.**

As you will see when the call is out, the Program Committee welcomes panels and roundtables that bring fresh perspectives on pedagogy, the publishing process, and professional development, particularly public-facing work. In an attempt to broaden participation, we will also have flash sessions, with shorter talks designed to present projects in their early stages of development.

Hope to see you in Buffalo next June!



# Announcements & News from Our Members

## Yale School of Medicine and Slavery

We are pleased to share an online exhibition on Yale School of Medicine and Slavery. This is the product of a one-year project conducted by postdoctoral fellows Liana DeMarco and Sean Mory Smith, along with John Harley Warner in the History of Medicine, and supported by the medical school's dean as part of Yale University's exploration of its formative ties to slavery. Our research, presented as eight essays and a video on bodysnatching, shows how the culture of slavery and the ideologies of racism were infused into the fabric of a medical school located in a New England port city engaged in Atlantic and West Indian trade networks.

See the exhibition here:

<https://onlineexhibits.library.yale.edu/s/ymslavery/page/introduction>

## Open Access Teaching Module on the Black Death

An open-access teaching module on the late medieval plague pandemic commonly known as the Black Death is in the final stages of production and should be available in early September. (1st link) A blogpost announcing the module and the novelty of its approach is available now (2nd link). Questions? Feel free to contact me: [monica.h.green@gmail.com](mailto:monica.h.green@gmail.com).

[See the module here.](#)

## Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry New Website

At the Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry at the University of Virginia, we have redesigned our website to make our collections more visible and easier to navigate. Our archives are now organized by subject area, highlighting the range of our holdings related to the history of nursing and healthcare: military nursing, public health nursing, nurse practitioners, specialty nursing, nursing education, underrepresented nurses, hospitals and clinics, professional organizations, and much more. We've also improved the searchability for our library of historical nursing texts, through UVA Library's online catalog, Virgo.

You can access the Bjoring Center website at:

<https://history.nursing.virginia.edu>

The Corpus of Early Medieval Latin Medicine (CEMLM) is happy to share that our Handlist of early medieval Latin manuscripts containing medical texts that were overlooked by the existing catalogues (namely, Beccaria (1956) and Wickersheimer (1966)) is now freely available on the CEMLM website.

We should note that this is still a beta version, and we would welcome feedback, suggestions for additional manuscripts, etc. In the meantime, we hope that it will be of use to many members of the AAHM community!

[You can see the list here!](#)

**Felicia Kornbluh, Ph.D.**, has been named the Martin Duberman Visiting Fellow at the New York Public Library for 2025-26. Kornbluh will work on their project about the Sharon Kowalski legal case - disability, lesbian feminism, health politics, and law in the 1980s-early 1990s. Anyone with perspectives to share please write: [fkornbluh@gmail.com](mailto:fkornbluh@gmail.com)

# Announcements & News from Our Members

## The C.F. Reynolds Medical History Society Speakers Series

The C.F. Reynolds Medical History Society announces its 2025-26 speaker series. All lectures take place online at 7pm Eastern Time. They are free and open to the public via Zoom (join email list at [cfreynoldsmhs@gmail.com](mailto:cfreynoldsmhs@gmail.com) or see website for link closer to the date). Annual membership is \$25 per calendar year, or \$10 for trainees; funds support speaker honoraria.

### September 30, 2025 ~ Milton Meyer Michaels Lecture

"The History of Hemophilia"

Franklin Bontempo, MD (Medicine/Hematology, University of Pittsburgh)

### November 11, 2025 ~ Sylvan E. Stool Memorial Lecture

"The Skillful Surgeon: Expertise, Authority, and Surgical Illustrations in Late Renaissance Europe"  
Alisha Rankin, PhD (History, Tufts)

January 20, 2026 ~ Graduate School of Public Health speaker + Annual Business Meeting ~ TBA

### February 24, 2026

"White-Capped Dreams: The (Dis)appearance of Filipino Men Nurses Under the Colonial Gaze, 1910–1945"

Ren Capucao, MSN, RN, and PhD  
(Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry, School of Nursing, University of Virginia)

### April 7, 2026 ~ Jonathan Erlen Lecture

"The Antonine Plague and the End of Ancient Rome's Golden Era"

Colin Elliott, PhD (History, University of Indiana, Bloomington)

[Register for the talks here.](#)

## Do Less Harm: A New Volume from Johns Hopkins University Press

Courtney Thompson and Kylie Smith are excited to announce the publication of our edited collection "Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians" with Johns Hopkins University Press. The book contains 5 sections: The Historian; Archives and Museums; Research; Writing; and Teaching, each containing 5-6 short chapters.

The chapters cover a multitude of issues and questions encountered by health historians and includes appendices of suggested readings and questions for discussion, with a conclusion by Susan Reverby.

The book evolved from a CHSTM online working group during 2021-2022, and after generating discussion at the most recent AAHM conference, Courtney and Kylie will be restarting the CHSTM online group in the Fall semester. Meetings will take place on the THIRD FRIDAY of every month from 2-3:30 pm eastern. The first meeting will be September 19 and will focus on new readings and questions decided by members.

To sign up for the working group please visit the CHSTM website here  
<https://www.chstm.org/group/ethics-and-in-history-medicine-and-human-sciences>

# Announcements & News from Our Members

## UW Madison Department of Medical History and Bioethics Celebrates 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

You're Invited! Please join the UW Madison Department of Medical History and Bioethics to celebrate our 75th Anniversary of Medical History and 50th Anniversary of Bioethics!

 October 9–10, 2025  
 UW Madison

Thursday, Oct. 9, 5:30–7:30 PM: Welcome reception with appetizers, drinks, and keynote address from distinguished alumna Dr. Leslie Reagan

Friday, Oct. 10, 9:00 AM–4:00 PM: Full-day conference with panels and sessions featuring faculty, students, alumni, and emeriti at the Health Sciences Learning Center, lunch catered from local favorite Ahan.

Please RSVP by [clicking this link](#) by September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## Call for Chapters

Call for chapter contributions: "Public Health Humanities: tools for learning and practice"

We invite proposals for contributions to a new 'toolkit' (or textbook) for learning and practice in the field of public health humanities. The toolkit will contain guidance for practical activities that develop or deploy humanities skills for public health, and will be published as an interactive e-book and in print.

One-page proposals for contributions are welcomed from scholars, teachers, or practitioners anywhere in the world, with backgrounds in arts, humanities, social sciences or public health. Innovative formats or modes of presentation (such as graphic treatments) for the one-page proposal are welcome and encouraged. Please follow the link for the full call for contributions and the proposal submission form.

Deadline for proposals: September 30th, 2025.  
Informal enquiries are very welcome: please email [savita.rani@usask.ca](mailto:savita.rani@usask.ca) and/or [janet.weston@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:janet.weston@lshtm.ac.uk)

## Felix E. Rietmann (University of

Fribourg/University of Lausanne) has been awarded an SNSF Starting Grant (1.7 Mio) for the research project "Pediatric Dugs since 1945:

From Local Practice to Global Politics."

Starting in June 2025, the project will investigate the clinical use, administrative regulation and political economy of pediatric pharmaceuticals in and beyond Switzerland across the second half of the twentieth century.

Further information will soon be available under the link indicated below.

**CHECK YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

Is your membership up to date? Check your status and renew today at [www.histmed.org/membership/](http://www.histmed.org/membership/)

# Announcements & News from Our Members

## COLLABORATION SOUGHT: THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN MEDICAL THOUGHT: LESSONS LEARNED AND LOST

In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) held a historic summit on traditional medicine in India. The conclusion of that Summit was that traditional medicinal knowledge and integrative medicine are critical in primary health care. The findings of the summit, the Gujarat Declaration, outlines ways the WHO member countries can facilitate the full integration of traditional healing practices into primary health care. Additionally, interest in natural healing strategies is growing worldwide as diseases have shifted from primarily infectious and starvation, to behavioral. Conventional Western medicines emerged and thrived in this former environment, while traditional healing practices gave focus to prevention, wellness, low risk medicines (botanicals), and therapeutic strategies not readily addressed in current Western medical thought. Despite the international recognition of the value of traditional healing practices such as acupuncture, Ayurveda, herbal medicine, naturopathic medicine, traditional birthing practices, and other disciplines, there remains strong antagonism against traditional healing modalities among many.

The American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP) seeks collaboration from a medical historian for the development of an academic article exploring specific events in medical history that led to the prevailing medical thought exemplified in conventional medicine today. We intend to specifically explore some of the great gains made from the genesis of rational scientific thought while examining what has been lost but is maintained in traditional healing systems. It is only through recognition of the strengths and limitations of both systems of medicine, conventional and traditional, that a true integration can occur.

Potential collaborators are encouraged to contact AHP President, Roy Upton (roy@herbal-ahp.org 1-831-247-4607) for further discussion of this project.

## NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

### *THE JEWISH HOSPITAL* by Jonathan Hammel

*The Jewish Hospital* (Skyhorse, June 2026) is a historical novel based on the remarkable true story of the only Jewish hospital to remain open in Nazi Berlin throughout World War II. Against all odds, this institution—where every patient, nurse, and doctor was Jewish—operated in the heart of the Third Reich, treating the sick while navigating deportation lists, forced labor, and constant threat.

Inspired by the firsthand accounts of Hammel's grandmother, Gerda Haas, who served there as a nurse during the war, the novel blends meticulously researched history with vivid storytelling. Drawing on archives, survivor testimonies, and period photographs, *The Jewish Hospital* offers an intimate view of medicine under dictatorship—where ethical decisions were made in extreme conditions, and survival often depended on split-second choices.

Endorsed by Holocaust scholars and acclaimed novelists Heather Morris (*The Tattooist of Auschwitz*) and Georgia Hunter (*We Were the Lucky Ones*), the book has already been recognized by institutions including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, and the Leo Baeck Institute. Educational partners in multiple states are developing discussion guides for high school and university classrooms, making it a resource for both historical and medical ethics curricula.

For historians of medicine, *The Jewish Hospital* illuminates an overlooked chapter where healthcare, identity, and resistance collided. It invites reflection on the role of medical professionals under oppressive regimes—and the quiet acts of defiance that saved lives.



AAHM kicked off the summer by celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in Boston! We had record attendance and a program packed with fascinating panels, stimulating conversations, and meaningful meetings, all capped with a champagne toast and sparklers! Deepest thanks to Local Arrangements Committee chairs, David Shumway Jones and Emily Gustainis, Program Committee chairs Johanna Schoen and Rebecca Kluchin, and Fun Committee chair Janet Golden and their committees. It was a very happy birthday indeed!



## *Congratulations to our winners!*

One of the best parts of our annual meeting is celebrating our prize winners! Congratulations to Zoe Kieu Bui Hahn and Lucy Zheng (Osler), Michael Stanley-Baker (Estes), Emma Wathen (Shryock), Elizabeth O'Brien (Welch), Marissa Nichols (Pressman-Burroughs), Jacqueline Wolf (Miller Lifetime), and Nursing Clio (Rosen)!



## *See you in Buffalo! June 4-7, 2026*