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SPECIAL SECTION

A TRIBUTE TO SAUL JARCHO, MD

SAUL JARCHO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

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On 23 June 1995, friends of Saul Jarcho convened at the New York Academy of Medicine to assess and praise his contributions to the history of medicine during the past seven decades. A dozen of Jarcho's colleagues from around the country spoke about his work as a physician and historian, his contributions as a scholar of the history of disease, and his place in the medical community of New York City. Then, Jarcho commented on the papers of his colleagues and read excerpts from his unpublished autobiography.

Jarcho had shared the full manuscript of his autobiography with me a few months earlier, to assist me in introducing the conference. My task was to offer generalizations about his career that were grounded in the evidence of his autobiography and his publications, without violating the confidentiality of the unpublished evidence.

I attempted this straddle by asserting that Saul Jarcho has had an intensely personal relationship with information, a romance with inquiry, and a strong attachment to his vision of integrity. Many people in medicine seek information, enjoy inquiry, and place high value on integrity, but Jarcho stands out in every group with which he has been associated.

Since boyhood, Jarcho has had a precocious appetite for facts. He has an extraordinary ability to process experience quickly into information, and then to order, store, retain, and retrieve it. In his autobiography, he reports that his feats of memory and aptitude for languages have stimulated awe and envy in others.

Jarcho loves facts for their own sake, but he loves them even more because of the questions he has answered with them, especially questions about the history of medicine across many centuries, about contemporary diseases that interest him, and about his patients. A handful of scholars have asked similar

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questions about most of the historical subjects that interest Jarcho, but on many subjects he has been a one-man community of scholars.

During a long career, moreover, he has been confident about his standards of virtue. He has seen his duty, clearly, in every area of his life, and he has done it. He reports that he has agonized about some matters, but never about what is proper and what is prudent.

Born in New York City in 1906, Jarcho's intellectual abilities emerged early. After graduating with high honors from Harvard College, the youngest member of his class, he studied Roman literature at Columbia University, earning an MA degree. Then, he attended Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons, interned in medicine and pathology at Johns Hopkins, and received additional training at the School of Tropical Medicine, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Jarcho practiced internal medicine in New York City for many years. He had 40 years of continuous service at the Mt. Sinai Hospital. During these years, he also taught, served on many committees of the New York Academy of Medicine, and was editor-in-chief of this journal from 1967 to 1976.

His national service included a long association with the US Army, beginning during World War II when he was chief of the Analysis Branch of its Medical Intelligence Division. In 1946-1947 and 1974-1975, he was a consultant to the surgeon general of the army. For many years, he consulted to the National Institutes of Health and National Library of Medicine.

Jarcho's *curriculum vitae* lists more than 500 scholarly articles, reviews, and translations in fields that include the history of pathology and cardiology and the geography of disease. His scholarship and service to his profession brought him membership on many editorial boards and numerous awards, which include the New York Academy of Medicine Plaque, the Jacobi Medal from the Mt. Sinai Hospital, and the Welch Medal and Continuing Lifetime Achievement Award of the American Association for the History of Medicine. During the conference on 23 June 1995, he received the George Urdang Medal from the American Institute for the History of Pharmacy.