

*Putting a Stamp on Medicine's History A Philatelic
Commentary and Select Bibliography*

Dale Stirling

Introduction

This is an abbreviated version of a still-in process meta-analysis of medical philately and includes a select bibliography abstracted from a bibliography with more than 500 citations. The hobby, art, and science stamp collecting has captured the attention of millions of philatelists since the first postage stamp was affixed to a letter in 1840 in London (known as the *Penny Black*). The hobby gained traction with the world-wide use of postage stamps in the late 19th century. Even more fans came to the table when international philatelic exhibitions began in the late 1920s. Philately can be organized into the following four categories:

1. Philately as a **hobby** pertains to the joy of collecting and its progenitors often believe that one can amass a world of information by acquiring stamps from countries other than their own.
2. Philately as **art** pertains to stamps issued by countries to celebrate specific nationalistic ideals or propaganda, personalities, localities, and events—often commissioned by governments from well-known artists.
3. Philately as a **science** pertains to technical aspects of stamps such as design processes, printing methods, paper selection, methods of marking, the determination of forgeries and fakes.
4. Philately as **education** promotes science, engineering, chemistry, the natural science, and the humanities. It also promotes the pursuit of stamp collecting.

When considering the multi-faceted nature of philately, it is not surprising that some philatelists focus on a specific theme or subject area. One of the most popular thematic areas of philately is medicine. The first stamp celebrating medicine was issued in British Colony of Nevis in 1860 which illustrated Greek medical mythology. [Pearn 2011].

General Commentary

To grasp the characteristics of medical philately, I conducted a comprehensive literature search using a variety of databases and web-based resources (PubMed, ProQuest, EBSCO, etc.). Of some 500 pertinent citations identified, most were published between the 1960s and the 2010s while the others were published between the mid-19th century and the 1950s. A review of the literature reveals that medical philately is generally organized into the following categories:

- Its History
- Biographical
- Diseases and Disorders
- Geographical Perspectives
- Medical Specialties and Equipment

The literature also reveals that, medical philately, although not a scientific pursuit, has value in at least three important ways:

1. For countries marginalized by Western medicine, medical philately promotes awareness of their contributions to the evolution and advancement of medicine
2. Medical philately acknowledges medical pioneers with an increasing acknowledgement of women and minorities as we move into the 21st century
3. Medical philately promotes awareness of diseases and disorders that affect many of the world's population; especially infectious disease, which is a current global concern as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

References

1. Afshar, A. 2010. A brief Iranian medical history through commemorative postage stamps. *Archives Iran Med.* 13(2):161-165.

2. Agris, J. 1981. Stamps commemorating medicine. Alcoholism. *J Dermatol Surg Oncol.* 7(11):860.
3. Ambros. W.O. 1972. Orthodontic philately. *Osterr Dent Z.* 24(3):64-5. [German]
4. Andrews, M.J. 1956. Medical history as portrayed on postage stamps. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 48:1-9.
5. Arkless, H.A. 1965. Pediatric philately—1964. *Clin Pediatr.* 4(4):247-251.
6. Ask-Upmark, E. 1976. *Medicine Told By Stamps.* Stockholm: Awe/Gebers.
7. Benjamin, L.T. 2003. Why can't psychology get a stamp? *J Appl Psychoanalytic Studies.* 5(4):443-454.
8. Bishop, W.J. & Matheson, N.M. 1948. *Medicine And Science In Postage Stamps.* London: Harvey & Blythe.
9. Blanco Augusto, J.M. 1967. *La Medicina en la Filatelia.* Barcelona: Ediciones Emeuve.
10. Borgsteede, F.H.M. 2007. *Parasitology: A Philatelic Perspective.* Malvern, Worcestershire, UK: Shernacre Enterprises.
11. Bowman, I.A. 1983. The image of the nurse on international postage stamps, 1920-1970. *Literature and Medicine.* 2:91-100.
12. Brewer, A.F. 1979. U.S. philately in medicine. *J Florida Med Assoc.* 66(8):866-870.
13. Chakravorty, R. 1996. Some recent German stamps of medical interest. *Scalpel Tongs.* 40:100-2.
14. Daubresse, J. 1968. *Medicine et Philatelchie.* Brussels: Echophil.
15. Davies, M.K. 1992. Health messages on postage stamps. *World Health Forum.* 13(1):48-49.
16. De Benedictis, G. 1985. *Philmedica: Proposte di Tematica Medica.* Rome: Piero Lacaita Editore.
17. Furukawa, A. 1994. *Medical History Through Postage Stamps.* St. Louis: Ishiyaku Euro America.
18. Gluckman, L. 1996. Ichthyology: Some medico-philatelic aspects. *Scalpel Tongs.*

40(37):37-40.

19. Iglesias, M.A. 1996. Medical doctors in Cuban stamps. *Scalpel Tongs*. 40(19):28-30.
20. King, J.W. 1974. Blood banking and philately. *Cleveland Clin Q*. 41(3):149-157.
21. Kler, J.H. 1969. *Medicine On Stamps*. New York: Minkus Publications.
22. Kler, J.H. 1983. Medical philately: Missionary medicine. *J Med Soc N J*. 80(4):302.
23. Kyle, R.A. & Shampo, M.A. (Eds). 1970. *Medicine And Stamps*. Chicago: American Medical Association.
24. Locke, R.D. 1990. Veterinary history on stamps. *Vet Hist*. 6(4):117-9.
25. Loevy, H.T. & Kowitz, A.A. 2008. Dentistry on stamps: A commemorative stamp on dental health. *J Hist Dent*. 56:44.
26. Mayer, G.A. 1975. Stamps of Canadian medical interest. *CMAJ*. 113(5):367.
27. Mehnert, E. 1991. Veterinary medicine in philately. *Historia Medicinae Veterinariae*. 17(3):65-92.
28. Newerla, G.J. 1964. *Medical History In Philately*. Milwaukee, WI: American Topical Association.
29. Newerla, G.J. 1971. *Medical History In Philately And Numismatics*. Waltham, MA: Pine Hill Press.
30. Ohtake, H. 1976. Nuclear medicine seen in postal stamps. *Rinsho hoshasen*. 21(13):1177-1178. [Japanese]
31. Ohtake, H. 1977. Nuclear medicine seen in postal stamps. II. *Rinsho hoshasen*. 22(5):520.
32. Parker, T. 1973. Rhodesian medicine and philately. *Central Afr J Med*. 19(10):222-223.
33. Pearn, J. 1969. Medical philately of Australia. *Med J Aust*. 1(25):1318-24.
34. Pearn, J. 2011. Medical biography: The philatelic record. *J Med Biography*. 19:139-140.
35. Pyrig, L.A. 1991. Ukrainian medicine in the mirror of philately. *Vrachebnoe Delo*. 9:118-121. [Ukrainian]

36. Rodriguez Castells, H. 1992. Medicine in philately. *Bol Acad Nac Med B. Aires.* 70(2):375-82. [Spanish]
37. Rugendorff, E.W. 2005. *Urology And Philately: A Philatelic Rumble Through Urology.* New York: Self Published.
38. Salopek, I. 2008. Croatian postage stamps featuring distinguished medical events and personalities. *Acta Med Hist Adriat.* 6(2):337-342.
39. Sanders, L.J. 2001. *The Philatelic History Of Diabetes.* University of Chicago Press.
40. Schwartz, A.W. 1992. *Physicians and Medicine on Currency and Stamps (3 Volumes).* Bakersfield, CA: Schwartz.
41. Shampo, M.A. & Rosenow, E.C. 2009. A history of tuberculosis on stamps. *Chest.* 136:578-582.
42. Talapian, A.S. 1976. Philippine medical philately. *Philippine Philatelic News.* 2(1):17.
43. Taub, M. 1978. Cancer stamps: 50 years in the crusade against cancer through stamps. *Cancer J Clin.* 28:164-169.
44. Tierney, J. 1997. The world's first medical postage stamp. *Med Health RI.* 80(3):99.
45. Tierney, J. 1998. A philatelist's history of smallpox vaccination. *Med Health RI.* 81(3):111.
46. Verveen, G. 1982. Chirurgia: The handicraft of medicine. Philatelically illustrated historic survey of surgery. *Am J Surg.* 143(5):640-648.
47. Wilson, T. 1996. Hungary: Some stamps of medical interest. *Scalpel Tongs.* 40(19):24-7.
48. Wolff, W.H. 1954. Medical art on stamps. *Med Monatsschr.* 8(7):490-2.
49. Yardley, C.B. 2014. *The Representation Of Science And Scientists On Postage Stamps.* ANU Press.