Guide to the Dr. Bruno Z. Kisch Papers

NMAH.AC.0835
Helen Wirka
2005
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Dr. Bruno Z. Kisch Papers
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0835
Date: 1904-1968.
Extent: 3.5 Cubic feet (11 boxes)
Source: Science, Medicine and Society, Division of (NMAH, SI).
Kisch, Bruno Z., 1890-1966
Language: English

Some materials in French, German, Norwegian, and Spanish.
Summary: This collection consists of materials from the professional life of Dr. Bruno Z. Kisch.

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition
The collection was donated by Dr. Bruno Kisch’s wife, Prof. Ruth Kisch, of Brooklyn, New York, in 1971.

Ownership and Custodial History
Collection transferred from the Division of Medicine and Science to the Archives Center, in 2003.

Related Materials

xMaterials at the National Museum of American History
Division of Medicine and Science

Other artifacts in the collection include sphygmomanometers, sphygmographs, stethoscopes, pacemakers, stents, and one of Claud Beck’s defibrillators. The collection also has early examples of Bayer Aspirin.

Processing Information
Processed by Helen Wirka, intern, 2005.

Preferred Citation
Restrictions on Access

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Biographical Note

Dr. Bruno Zacharias Kisch (1890-1966) was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1890. He received his medical degree in 1913 at the Charles University of Prague and served in the Austrian army during World War I as a physician from 1914-1918. With the rise of Nazism, Kisch relocated to the United States in 1938 with his wife, Ruth, and their two children, Charlotte Rebecca and Arnold Emanuel. A colleague called him "one of the princely gifts that fell to America because of Adolph Hitler". In 1943, Kisch became a United States citizen.

Amongst his peers Kisch was credited as a "Da Vinci in a modern age" due to his wide range of interests. He was a founding member of the American College of Cardiology in 1949, and completed the first president's term upon his death in 1951. Kisch was elected as president in his own right at the end of the term and held the office of president from 1951-1953. From 1939 until 1966 Kisch had his own medical practice in New York City and was a researcher and consultant in cardiology. Kisch's major contribution to the field of cardiology was his experimentation with electron microscopes. He was the first scientist to use electron microscopes to perform cardiac research on warm-blooded animals. The microscope allowed researchers to study heart fibers more closely by magnifying cells by 30,000. Discoveries Kisch made through this research furthered the field of cardiology and led to the formation of the Electron Microscopic Institute in 1953.

The professorships he held at multiple schools, including Yeshiva University, in New York City, and Yale University, reflect his wide range of knowledge from physiology to the philosophy and history of science as does his consultation to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. on "the study of scales, weights, and measures", and his position as curator to the Edward Clark Streeter Collection of Weights and Measures at Yale University. Kisch's other interests can be found in the articles he wrote and the publications for which he served as founder/editor: "The Jewish Refugee and America"; "History of the Jewish Pharmacy (Judenapothek) in Prague"; "Scales and Weights – A Historical Outline"; "Shekel Metals and False Shekels"; Cardiologia; the Journal of Experimental Medicine and Surgery; and the Transactions of the American College of Cardiology. Dr. Bruno Z. Kisch passed away while visiting Germany in 1966. The Electron Microscopic Institute was dedicated in his memory in 1967.

Scope and Contents

Contains correspondence, most relating to Kisch's service as President of the American College of Cardiology; photomicrographs, of animal tissue specimens; writings and notes; notebooks on Dr. Kisch's experimentation and research, including many electrocardiograms; and printed material, such as medical journals containing articles by Dr. Kisch, and reprints of articles by Dr. Kisch.
The materials are useful to those with an interest in the American College of Cardiology during the 1950s, or those who have the ability to read and understand cardiological printouts.

Electrocardiograph: An instrument which records electrical currents produced by the heart.

Electrocardiography: A method of recording electrical currents traversing the heart muscle just previous to each heart beat. The study and interpretation of electrocardiographs.

Electrocardiogram: The graphic record of the heart's action currents obtained with the electrocardiograph.

Electrogram: Any record on paper or film made by an electrical event.

Tracing: Any graphic display of electrical or mechanical cardiovascular event.

Arrangement

Divided into 5 series:

Series 1, Personal materials
Series 2, Correspondence
Series 3, Notebooks
Series 4, Photographs, Micrographs and Negatives
Series 5, Publications

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
  Cardiology
  Electron microscopy
  Medical sciences
  Medicine -- Research
  Microscopy
  Physicians

Types of Materials:
  Correspondence -- 20th century
  Electron micrographs
  Laboratory notebooks
  Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- Glass -- 1890-1920
  Photomicrographs
  Reprints
  Technical literature
Names:
Science, Medicine and Society, Division of (NMAH, SI).
## Container Listing

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| Box 1, Folder 6 | Correspondence, American College of Cardiology, 1953 |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Correspondence, American College of Cardiology, late Dec. 1953-1954 |
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| Box 1, Folder 8a | Correspondence, American College of Cardiology, Sept. 1953-Feb. 1955 (Originals) |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Correspondence, American College of Cardiology, 1955 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Constitution and Bylaws, American College of Cardiology |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Membership Roster, American College of Cardiology |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Bulletins, American College of Cardiology, Jan. 1951-Dec. 1955 |
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| Box 1, Folder 15 | Electron Microscope Definitions of Terms |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Electron Microscope Grant Correspondence and Applications |
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Box 8, Folder 17  Gewitche und Waagemacher Im Alten Koln,(How Scales and Weights Were Made in Old Cologne), 1960
Box 8, Folder 18  Handbuch der Biochemie des Menschen und der Tiere, (Handbook for the Biochemistry of Animals and Humans), 1933

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