Guide to the InBae Yoon Papers

NMAH.AC.1414
Sara Wheeler
2017
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: InBae Yoon Papers
Identifier: NMAH.AC.1414
Date: 1970-2009
(bulk 1973-2003)
Extent: 13 cubic feet (34 boxes)
Creator: Yoon, InBae, 1936-2014
Language: English

Some materials are in Korean.
Collection is in English.

Summary: InBae Yoon was a Korean American inventor. He specialized in OB-GYN surgery, and his inventions aided in the safety of laparoscopic and endoscopic surgery. The papers include personal documents, corporate agreements and licenses, technical drawings, patent applications, correspondence, project proposals, and methods and procedures.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
Collection donated by Kyung Joo Yoon, widow of InBae Yoon, 2017.

Separated Materials
The Division of Medicine and Science holds artifacts related to this collection.

Processing Information
Processed by Sara Wheeler, July 2017; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Restrictions
Collection is open for research. Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs.
Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Appraisal

The Archives Center staff focused on documenting three of Dr. Yoon's invention: the "Yoon Ring," a device for tubal ligation for women, patented in 1975; a penetrating instrument with safety shield, and method for introducing a portal sleeve into a cavity in the body, patented in 1985; and surgical clips and applicator, patented in 1992.

Archivists examined approximately 147 cubic feet of material and selected approximately 19 cubic feet for permanent retention.

Biographical / Historical

Dr. InBae Yoon (1936-2014) was a prolific Korean American inventor of surgical devices and instrumentation. He was born in Korea during the Japanese Occupation (1910-1945) and attended the Yonsei University School of Medicine, earning his medical degree in 1961. From 1961 to 1964, Yoon served as medical officer in the South Korean Navy, and in 1964 he participated in a program developed to match Korean medical doctors with United States hospitals and medical schools. As a result, Yoon immigrated to Baltimore, Maryland to conduct his rotating internship and general surgical residency at Church Home and Hospital. During his residency, Yoon switched his training from general surgery to obstetrics and gynecology and became fascinated by laparoscopy, a method of surgery performed using a scope placed through the umbilicus, sometimes with other small incisions in the abdomen. During this period he was exposed to tubal ligation, one of the few surgeries done laparoscopically at the time. Observing some of the injuries and complications from these early laparoscopic procedures he became interested in safer laparoscopic methods. After completing his residency in 1969 and finishing a yearlong fellowship, he joined a private practice. In 1973 he then joined the John Hopkins University School of Medicine as an assistant professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology where he explored new laparoscopic techniques and procedures.

Yoon became convinced that laparoscopic or "keyhole" surgery was the future. His first invention, the Yoon Ring, was developed between 1972 and 1974, with the patent being issued in 1975 (US Patent 3,870,048). The Yoon Ring system, manufactured with KLI Incorporated, provided a safer method for laparoscopic tubal ligation by applying a silastic ring around the fallopian tube to prevent pregnancy. This simple mechanical method of tubal ligation avoided many of the complications associated with other tubal ligation techniques that utilized electrocautery. Yoon began to see further potential for the use of laparoscopy and from 1975 to 1985, he focused on inventing safety systems for laparoscopic procedures, including safety trocars, safety needles, and safety catheters, which all aided in different aspects of laparoscopic surgery. Yoon spent much of the late 1980s to the early 2000s, working on new innovations such as retractable penetrating instruments, suture tie instruments, cavity stents and expanders, as well as making modifications to previous safety system designs. During this period, Yoon investigated and sought out the assistance of a few large instrument manufacturing companies, such as Richard Wolf GmbH, Olympus, and Cabot Medical in an effort to bring his trocar designs to the market without success. In 1985, Yoon then incorporated his own company, Yoonitech, Inc. to pursue his inventions. In 1988, Yoon established a relationship with Johnson and Johnson, specifically the subsidiary of the company, Ethicon, which later became Ethicon Endo Surgery (EES) and licensed his shielded trocar patent (US Patent 4,535,773) to bring his product to market. From 1995-2005, Yoon continued to collaborate with EES for the production of instruments and techniques for laparoscopy and endoscopy. Dr. Yoon passed away on
December 30, 2014. After 5 decades of focusing on this innovative approach to surgery, he amassed over 200 U.S. patents for his work.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents Dr. Yoon's life and career as a surgeon and his invention and development of numerous tools, instruments and procedures. The collection specifically focuses on three inventions: the "Yoon Ring", a device for tubal ligation for women patented in 1975; a penetrating instrument with safety shield, and method for introducing a portal sleeve into a cavity in the body, patented in 1985; and surgical clips and applicator, patented in 1992. All three were manufactured and widely used. The contents include invention notebooks, sketches, photographs and slides, correspondence, patents, patent applications, legal papers, business papers, articles and clippings, reference files, and some audiovisual materials.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 6 series.

**Series 1: Personal Documents and Correspondence, 1980-1999**

**Series 2: Professional Activities, 1974-2009**

**Series 3: Corporate Agreements and Correspondence, 1970-2005**

Subseries 3.1: Ethicon Endo-Surgery (Johnson & Johnson), 1987-2003


Subseries 3.3: Cabot Medical Instruments Corporation, 1984-1986

Subseries 3.4: KLI, 1973-1980

Subseries 3.5: Reznick, 1982-1986

Subseries 3.6: Other Disclosures and Partnerships, 1973-1999

**Series 4: Drawings and Technical Specifications, 1970-2005**

**Series 5: Legal Documents, 1970-2003**

Subseries 5.1: Patents, 1970-2003

Subseries 5.2: Ethicon Inc./InBae Yoon vs. United States Surgical Corporation/Choi, 1975-1998

Subseries 5.3: Correspondence, 1975-2001

**Series 6: Projects and Proposal Documents, 1975-2001**

Names and Subject Terms

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

   Endoscopy
   Ethicon Endo-Surgery, Inc.
   Inventions -- 20th century
   Inventors -- 20th century
   Laparoscopes
   Laparoscopic surgery
   Medical Equipment
   Medical innovations
   Medical instruments and apparatus
   Patents
   Sterilization (Birth control)
   Surgery
   Surgical instruments and apparatus
   United States Surgical Corporation

Types of Materials:

   Articles -- 20th century
   Business records -- 20th century
   Clippings -- 20th century
   Correspondence -- 20th century
   Design drawings
   Legal documents
   Notebooks -- 20th century
   Patent applications
   Patents -- 20th century
   Photographs -- 20th century
   Slides (photographs) -- 20th century

Occupations:

   Physicians
   Surgeons
# Container Listing

## Series 1: Personal Documents and Correspondence, 1980 - 1999

This series contains Yoon's guide to the abbreviations used in his notes and outlines of what Yoon called his "Way of Life." Personal correspondence and Korean newspapers are also a part of the series.

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This series consists of professional correspondence, authored articles, and articles and textbooks featuring Yoon's procedures and methods. Also included are documents related to professional medical associations, Baltimore hospitals, and alumni newsletters.

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