History of Medicine
Simone Kropf (Fiocruz), in collaboration with Prof. Joel Howell (UM)

First steps to a partnership

- Research on the history of Chagas disease in Brazil (Kropf, 2009)
- The importance of the “Michigan school” (Frank Norman Wilson’s ECG techniques) to the clinical definition of Chagas heart disease in the 1940s
- First contact with historiography of cardiology: Joel D. Howell’s article on the history of the “soldiers’ heart” and the institutionalization of cardiology in the 1910s and 1920s (Medical History, supplement 1995)

New plans: the wish to study the history of cardiology in Brazil.

The opportunity for a partnership

- September 2012: UM-Fiocruz collaboration signed
- First contacts with Prof. Howell by email
- August 2013 (I Seminar in Rio de Janeiro): first talks and plans...

Research aim: to study the history of cardiology in Brazil (1930 – 1950s) focusing on U.S. and Brazil’s interchanges, especially as regards the use of electrocardiography.

Main research questions:

- Were exchanges between FNW and Brazilian physicians (especially as regards learning the new technology of electrocardiography at UM’s Heart Station) a decisive way to promote the institutionalization of the new specialty in Brazil?
- Did this process of specialization followed similar patterns and paths in both countries?
- How were medicine, cultural diplomacy, politics and society related in this historical process?
- Some hypotheses: promoting what was considered to be healthier and more productive workers; promoting interamerican relationships and interests during the WWII; promoting “transference” / “circulation” of new medical technologies of diagnosing heart disease; promoting new networks of physicians, institutions and medical communities.
First results

- January 2014: a grant from the Brazilian agency for science and technology (CNPq)
- August 2014: Prof. Howell’s second stay at Rio for the “History of Medicine Course” at Fiocruz
- Research at Brazilian and U.S. archives until this moment:
  - In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: medical journals; primary sources at the medical schools in both cities; interviews; newspapers that reported FNW’s visit to Rio and São Paulo in July-August 1942
  - FNW’s Collection: correspondence with Brazilians about his trip to Latin America in 1942
  - UM Bentley Historical Library: the intense Latin-American exchanges during the 1930s and 1940s; documents related to the Heart Station (UM Medical School)

Next steps

To continue research at the archives

Second stay at UM and at Washington’s archives in 2015

Preparing articles for both historical and medical audiences

Frank Norman Wilson in São Paulo, 1942.


Thank you!
Obrigado!

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