

Semmelweis Museum, Library and Archives of the History of Medicine

Museum

The Semmelweis Medical History Museum, together with the National Medical History Library (1950) and the Archives (1974) make up the most important research basis of the Hungarian physician history.

The Museum was opened in 1965. In the last 4 decades the collections of the museum got highly extended, and thus by now they form one of the richest physician and chemist historical collection.

Our collection target embraces the whole of the Hungarian medicine, pharmacy and medical system, but these are naturally supplemented by the objective relics of western medicine. Several of our collections are of outstanding significance (numismatic collection, device collection, Fontana-collections, pharmacy bowls, painting collection).

Our permanent exhibition represents the development of western medicine from the prehistoric age to the beginning of the 20th century. We place special emphasis on the development of Hungarian medical system, the work of Semmelweis and the establishment of the modern Hungarian medication.

Up to the end of the 1990'ies nearly two third of our visitors were from foreign countries. In recent years we have managed to raise the interest of the Hungarian visitors as well, so by today we have almost the same number of Hungarian and foreign visitors.

Each year temporal exhibitions deal with healing methods and art activities connecting to medication. The other type of the temporal exhibitions represent the development of medicine in light of the connections with natural science, economical, cultural and political history.

Our periodical entitled looks back to a history of 47 years. In recent years we have published several albums of an artistic value. We restarted the series called Libri Historiae Medicae in 2001, through which we publish medical monographies and history of medical schools and Hungarian medication.

Pictures from the history of healing (Permanenet exhibition)

The history of medicine cannot be examine exclusively from national aspect: it is, just like mathematics, physics or music, is connected to certain civilizations.

The core of our exhibition is made up by the history of western medicine. We will guide our visitors from ancient Egypt to the most modern times. The exhibition represents the development of biological knowledge, surgery and obstetrics techniques through scientific books, documents, paintings, statues, etc. The artistic expressions of disease, death and healing are demonstrated as well. Visitors can also gain knowledge about the role of pharmacy and medicine in different civilizations and ages, that is, the versatile and ever changing traditions of the culture of western medicine.

Another important part of the exhibition is the demonstration of the Hungarian medical system. Serious changes in Hungary between the 10th and 20th centuries and the famous scientists between the 18th and 20th centuries made a lasting effect on the Hungarian medical science. Through these the Hungarian medical system rose to the top rank of the international medicine.

The lifework of Semmelweis can be followed up through a detailed representation. The Museum is found in the former house of - perhaps the most well-known Hungarian - Ignác. The personal objects recall the atmosphere of the era and the turning points of his lifework.