



A Michigan Doctor's Office

C I R C A 1 9 0 8

You can now stand at the door of medicine as it was practiced a century ago at a special exhibit created by the U-M Medical School's Historical Center for the Health Sciences. In April 2000, "A Michigan Doctor's Office, Circa 1908" was installed in the lobby of the main hospital as part of the Medical School's Sesquicentennial Celebration.



The exhibit was first proposed by Howard Markel, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Historical Center for the Health Sciences. He was assisted by Christopher D. Meehan, curator of the Center's collection of medical artifacts, and Associate Director Alexandra M. Stern in completing the project.

"This reconstruction captures a pivotal moment in health care not only here in Michigan but throughout the U.S. as well," remarked Joel D. Howell, M.D., Ph.D., professor of history and of internal medicine, at the exhibit installation.

"It was a moment of transition from empirical to scientific medicine, from office-based to hospital-based medicine, but there remained some commonalities and persistent themes in the experience of people who came to the office."

Christopher Meehan, curator for the Historical Center for the Health Sciences, arranges artifacts in the reconstructed doctor's office.





"This reconstruction captures a pivotal moment in health care...a moment of transition from empirical to scientific medicine..." —Joel Howell

Many of the items in the turn-of-the-century doctor's office exhibit were graciously contributed or loaned by the following:

Theodore Cole, M.D., Frederick Coller, M.D. Collection, George DeMuth, M.D., and Family, Richard Freund, John Georg, Richard Judge, M.D. (Residency 1957), Dorothy McClusky, The George Washington Pray Family, George E. Wantz (M.D. 1946)

In the first decade of the 20th century, the science, practice, and teaching of medicine were transformed by developments in the emerging fields of biochemistry, bacteriology and physiology. Prior to this time, many patients received long term care at home and were visited by their physician; hospitals were frequently viewed as charity institutions for the homeless, mentally ill, and other wards of the state. But new technologies such as the x-ray, discovered in the late 19th century, were becoming invaluable to diagnostics and therapeutics and made the doctor's office and the hospital increasingly important sites for medical treatment. Surgery, in particular, progressed due to the development of x-ray technology and its applications and improvements in anesthesia and blood transfusion. Powerful new drugs such as anti-toxins and chemotherapeutic

agents were also being discovered and produced at this time. The microscope as a diagnostic tool refined methods of clinical diagnosis.

The exhibit was designed by the Ann Arbor office of Quinn Evans/Architects of Washington D.C., specialists in historical restoration. The Public Museum of Grand Rapids built the installation. Interior and exterior architectural details are reminiscent of the homes in Ann Arbor from which many physicians ran their private practices. [m](#)

