

Regenstreif, Michael. *Our History of Family Medicine. The Herzl Family Practice Centre and Department of Family Medicine of the Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital, Montreal, Quebec, 1912-1994*. Montreal, 1994.

This booklet honours one of Jewish Montreal's most important institutions, the Herzl Dispensary, and the people who founded it in 1912 and supported it during many subsequent moves and changes of name. Initiated by twelve Jewish doctors and the women of the Montreal Hebrew Ladies Benefit Society, the Dispensary was set up in a two story house on St. Dominique Street in Montreal's old Jewish quarter to provide medical treatment and medicines to the impoverished people living there, the vast majority of them immigrants. In the first year alone, there were 13,049 medical consultations, 5,441 of them with new patients, only half of whom could afford to pay even modest charges. Facilities included examining and consultation rooms, a pharmacy, and operating and recovery rooms for minor surgery; services were provided in several specialties. Later, dental care was added and a special tuberculosis clinic was established. However, the Dispensary's doctors treated only common ailments and performed minor surgery, referring the more complicated cases to the major hospitals where, because of the prevailing antisemitism, Jewish doctors could not obtain hospital privileges and Jewish nurses rarely were employed. Thus, the Dispensary served a need both for the Jewish poor—many of them seasonally-unemployed clothing workers—and for the rising number of Jewish doctors whose medical practises and, presumably, incomes were severely limited by their virtual exclusion from the city's major hospitals like the Montreal General, Royal Victoria, and Notre Dame. Few Jewish doctors were even allowed to serve as interns in these hospitals. When Dr. Sam Rabinovitch was granted an internship at Notre Dame in 1934, the hospital's doctors, who were supported by the doctors at four other hospitals, went on strike!

The medical, dental, and pharmaceutical services the Dis-

pensary provided to both Jewish and non-Jewish patients increased as it moved twice during the next thirty-six years to larger premises within the Jewish quarter, first to St. Urbain Street and then to Jeanne Mance, until in 1948, its facilities outdated and its Jewish clientele moving away, it relocated to the Jewish General Hospital located in Snowdon on Côte Ste. Catherine Road. Renamed the Herzl Family Practise Centre, the institution merged with the modern facilities of an up-to-date hospital while retaining the honourable tradition of providing medical attention and, gradually, other medico-social services to both the Jewish and non-Jewish residents of Montreal. The Dispensary's history, so sympathetically recounted by Michael Regenstreif, then, is a significant part of the broader social history of Montreal Jewry in an era of change, when immigrant poverty, confusion, and hopelessness at a time of medical, dental, and pharmaceutical need were met with *tsedakah* by many Jewish doctors and an active women's auxiliary. The Dispensary was one of twelve Jewish organizations that banded together to form the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of Montreal in 1916 and it provided a major inspiration for the establishment of the Montreal Clinical Society in 1923 and the Jewish General Hospital in 1934.

While the story is well told, one would have wished for more details, perhaps in the form of statistical tables based on the Dispensary's annual reports since 1912 of the number of cases and the diseases and conditions treated, a complete list of the medical and dental practitioners and their years of service, which they donated to the Dispensary, especially before the 1948 merger with the JGH, and more about the patient response to this wonderful institution.

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