Autograph and Correspondence Collection from the History of Medicine

By Kevin O’Brien

The Special Collections Department of the UIC Library of the Health Sciences - Chicago has processed a small but interesting collection of letters and documents from 34 notable figures of the history of medicine and science. The group of letters has been organized under the title Medical and Scientific Autograph and Correspondence Collection and is now available for use by researchers in the department’s newly refurbished reading room.

Highlights from the collection include an 1823 letter written by Jacob Berzelius (1779-1848), a leading figure from the early days of the science of chemistry and a brief 1888 letter from Joseph Lister (1827-1912), the English physician acknowledged as the originator of antiseptic surgery.

Perhaps the most noteworthy group of items in the collection is a set of papers by Rudolph Virchow (1821-1902), a pioneering German contributor to the development of cellular pathology. Included is a handwritten manuscript of an important article by Virchow on the calcification of tissue (“Kalk-Metastasen”) which appeared in the journal Archiv fur Pathologische Anatomie und Physiologie in 1855. Virchow’s influence is such that a prominent series of pathology journals still appearing today bears his name.

Images of the Berzelius and Virchow items are included at the end of this article.

Interested researchers are invited to examine this new collection, or any one of the department’s other many rare book and collections documenting the history of medicine and the UIC medical campus. The department’s reading room is open Monday through Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Letter by Jacob Berzelius

Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer ci-joint le diplôme de l'Académie des Sciences de Stockholm, qui vient de vous admettre au nombre des ses membres honorables.

Je profite de cette occasion pour vous remercier de la respectueuse considération avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'être,

Monsieur

[Signature]

Stockholm le 18 Février 1820.