

## RESEARCHING THE PAST, ADVANCING THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE: SELECTED PAPERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

### Editorial

The first part of the present issue of *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* is dedicated to selected papers presented at the international conference *Researching the Past, Advancing the Future of Medicine*, which was held on April 17–18, 2024, at the National Technical Museum in Prague. Organized by the National Technical Museum team, consisting of Ing. Mgr. Lucie Burešová and Mgr. David Hamr, the conference brought together scholars from multiple disciplines to explore the intersections of archaeology, the history of medicine, and contemporary scientific practice.

This multidisciplinary event underscored the significant role of historical and archaeological insights in shaping modern medical advancements. By revisiting historical diagnostic and treatment practices, materials, and methodologies, researchers not only gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of medical knowledge but also identify valuable lessons for present and future applications in healthcare.

### Highlights of the Conference

The conference commenced with an opening address by Prof. MUDr. Petr Neužil, CSc., FESC (Na Homolce Hospital, Prague), who examined the historical perspective on technology in cardiology. A diverse range of sessions followed, covering topics including the earliest smallpox inoculations in Europe (Doc. Mgr. Karel Černý, Ph.D., Charles University), and the history of rare diseases and their implications for contemporary medicine (Dr. Julia Gresky, German Archaeological Institute, Berlin).

Further presentations explored the evolution of oral health and dietary habits (Dr. Antonella Pedergnana, South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, Bolzano), ancient antimicrobial substances (Manuela Marai, University of Warwick), Roman-era venereal diseases (Katarzyna Porc, University of Wrocław), and historical perspectives on timekeeping in medicine (Mgr. David Hamr, National Technical Museum). Additional contributions examined early modern medical records (Mgr. Tommy Šmerda, Palacký University), traces of medical interventions in World War I prisoners (Dr. rer. nat. RNDr. Jan Nováček, Thuringia State Service for Cultural Heritage and Archaeology), and the role of historical water mains in public health studies (Doc. PhDr. Tomáš Alušík, Ph.D., and colleagues, Charles University). Also presented were investigations into medical chambers (MUDr. Bc. Tereza Kopecká, Ph.D., Charles University), the conflict between Galenic and Harveian physicians through treatises on respiration (Carter Patton, MPhil., University of Cambridge), and

Boonshoft School of Medicine), the historical legacy of Alexander Kolisko (Bc. Štefan Kaleta, Palacký University), and ancient wisdom in modern medicine (Dr. Nick Summerton, Durham University).

An integral part of the conference was the practical workshop on traceology analysis of metal artefacts. Led by Lucie Burešová, Jaroslav Lett, and Roman Kocina, the workshop facilitated hands-on exploration of tools used in historical diagnostics and treatments. Participants engaged in discussions, exchanged methodologies, and gained deeper insights into the application of experimental archaeology.

The conference concluded with an excursion on April 19, 2024, to two historically significant sites: the Church of St. Barbara and the Sedlec Ossuary in Kutná Hora. These visits provided a unique opportunity to contextualize the themes discussed in the conference within the broader history of medical and mortuary practices.

## **Peer Review and Publication**

Some of the speakers expressed interest in publishing their contributions in modified form as standard peer-reviewed studies in the AUC-HUCP journal. All contributions included in this issue have undergone rigorous peer review by two independent experts.

The first part of this volume includes four contributions containing original research presented at the conference and revised into written form. Carter Patton's article focuses on early modern medical debates (Willis's Circle? Exploring the Conflict Between Galenic and Harveian Physicians Through Treatises on Respiration). A study by Ondřej Stejskal and David Hamr entitled "A Walk Through Time" examines the historical development of joint replacements. Lucie Burešová, Jaroslav Lett, and Michal Kotýnek contributed an archaeological perspective in their work on the morphological characteristics and wear patterns of spatula-ended tools from the La Tène period. The Discussion Contributions section includes a thoughtful piece by Nick Summerton, "Ancient Wisdom and Modern Medicine," which bridges historical insight with contemporary clinical perspectives.

Finally, the issue offers book reviews of recent publications: Lucie Burešová assesses Jacopo Ortalli's edited volume *Domus del Chirurgo di Rimini*, highlighting the significance of this exceptional archaeological context, while David Hamr reviews Kassandra J. Miller's *Time and Ancient Medicine*, an engaging account of how ancient timekeeping influenced medical science. Together, these contributions illustrate the continued relevance of historical inquiry for understanding and advancing modern medical thought.

## **Looking Ahead: *Researching the Past, Advancing the Future of Medicine II***

With this issue being published after the 2025 conference, we are pleased to reflect on the continued success of the *Researching the Past, Advancing the Future of Medicine* series. The second edition took place at the National Technical Museum on April 9–11, 2025, further expanding the dialogue on historical medical knowledge and its relevance to contemporary medicine.

As we move forward, the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in this field remains evident, and we anticipate that the insights shared at both the 2024 and 2025 conferences will continue to inspire future research. We extend our gratitude to all contributors, reviewers, and organizers who made these conferences and their subsequent publications possible. Through these scholarly exchanges, we reaffirm the role of historical perspectives in shaping the future of medicine.

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