

# Oration from 1892

## Oration Title:

*A Sketch of the Medical History of the Worcester District Medical Society*

## Orator:

M.J. Halloran, M.D.

## Abstract of Oration:

This oration is delivered 98 years after the founding of the Worcester District Medical Society, and so Dr. Halloran chooses to reflect on these years, using previous orations as his focal point. To put the formation of the Society into context, he says, it is helpful to examine the state of medicine in the late 18th century. He gives statistics of deaths caused by different diseases. He describes the advent of small-pox inoculation and the practice of surgery without anaesthesia. The value of the microscope was not appreciated. Wound dressings were unsanitary and often promoted infection.

Dr. Halloran is quick to point out the enormous improvements that have been made in the last century. Antiseptic practices are always employed, surgery, especially neural surgery, has become a lot more advanced, performed in regions of the body previously incomprehensible for surgical procedures.

Halloran then paints a picture of the Worcester community at the end of the 18th century. He gives a brief description of each of the prominent Worcester doctors at the time. From there, the doctor says there is little of medical value in the secretary's reports until 1840, when the meeting was adjourned to allow the members to attend a Whig Convention in the city. The secretary at that time was more conscientious about keeping records with a medical perspective.

Dr. Halloran says that many of the members' papers from this date deal with obstetrical cases, and he describes some of them. He does the same for the surgically-focused papers. He first describes many osteo surgeries, then nephrological. Halloran next describes the papers dealing with antiseptic techniques. From here he moves on to bacteriological presentations. The papers on pediatric diseases are Dr. Halloran's next focus. In reporting on "an important and interesting paper on 'Incipient Mental Disorders'", Dr. Halloran advises his audience on how to deal with cases of mental depression: "as one of mental exhaustion and give time for bringing about recovery by ... brain nutrition." After describing trends in treatment of mental illnesses, Halloran touches upon various other topics among which are emergency diphtheria treatments, lead poisoning, and "Electro-Therapeutics in Medical Practice."

At the conclusion of his oration, Dr. Halloran calls on his fellow members to become more proactive in the legacy and the future of their society. He urges them to present more cases before the membership, reminding them that their observations and results are beneficial to the entire group.