

Oration from 1907

Oration Title:

Some Things Worth While to the Medical Society Today

Orator:

Jacob R. Lincoln, M.D.

Abstract of Oration:

Dr. Lincoln opens with a description of some early medical societies in America, including the Massachusetts Medical Society founded by the state legislature in 1781. He says these institutions were incorporated to set standards for medical education and certainly not for purposes of financial gain.

He asserts that never before has the public taken such an interest in public health and that medical societies like Worcester's have a definite place in this atmosphere of larger public health measures and leaps in preventative medicine. Well-educated men comprise the Society and it is men like they who are making the abounding medical advances. This image of the Society as an assembly with reason, education, and enlightenment at its core is crucial and cannot be marred if the now more health-conscious public is to trust and support these organizations. Therefore, membership must be extended only to well-esteemed physicians who will bring honor and respect to the organization. This policy calls into question whether homeopathic doctors should be included in the membership of such medical societies. Dr. Lincoln seems to favor accepting these applicants as they can teach their colleagues as well as learn from them. Likewise, he believes women, who are just recently being admitted to medical societies, have a place in the institutions. Lincoln claims that medical societies like Worcester's are vitally important as places where physicians can interact with a large number of their colleagues and further their medical knowledge. Two groups that especially benefit from this opportunity are young doctors who, just out of medical school, have little clinical experience, and the one-third of the Worcester Society's members who live outside the city and hence do not have as many occasions for interaction or for regular hospital visits.

Lincoln then focuses on the current state of the public health field. In addition to the more facile communication of disease and the waste production that exceeds waste containment capacity, the growth and subsequent crowding of cities has meant meat and milk production has shifted to a smaller number of farmers. This mass-production has led to poorer quality products which cause disease. In the face of this public health nightmare, municipal boards of health have become a necessary commonplace and doctors are the advisors to these institutions. To illustrate, he gives an example of how Worcester's waste was dumped directly into the Blackstone River, but now goes through a chemical treatment and filtration process

prior to entering the river. While an improvement, the system is still very unhealthy and Dr. Lincoln calls on his colleagues to fulfill the duties of their noble profession and push the boards to make further improvements.

Dr. Lincoln clearly respects the Worcester District Medical Society for its long and venerable past and also for its present activities and membership.