



NINETY YEARS AGO, FEBRUARY 1921

Frank E. Peckham, MD, FACS, in “The Spinal Mechanism in a Dual Role,” discussed the diagnosis, treatment, and causes of symptoms. He suggested “the vibratory theory for the nerve impulse, as opposed to the conductive theory. This theory fits in so many accounts...that it seems almost like a demonstration.”

Dennett L. Richardson, MD, in the Annual Address of the President of the Providence Medical Association, “Future Treatment of Disease,” proclaimed: “Every man, woman and child is entitled to prompt and skillful medical service whenever they are ill.” He based his belief not solely on humanitarianism, but on economics. “No country can afford not to supply sufficient funds for the prevention of disease and treatment...” He urged expansion of hospital dispensaries into health care hubs for communities.

“A Country Doctor in Rhode Island” (a nom de plume for a respected clinician) contributed “The Heart and Its Relation to the Mental State.” He noted a *Providence Journal* article (December 1, 1920) from the Associated Press: “One effect of the prolonged strain, according to physicians, has been a sharp increase in the number of patients admitted to insane asylums, and also an increase in heart disease. It has also resulted in a curious form of goiter among adults, especially women...” The author mocked the “graphic pen picture” of the journal, yet conceded “that the vicissitudes of life have a marked influence upon the heart, there is no doubt.” He added: “...mania is very noticeable in the latter stages of diseases of the heart.”

Charles O. Cooke, MD, in Case Report, described four cases of intestinal obstruction seen over the past 10 days at Rhode Island Hospital. The causes differed (cancer, obstruction of the ileum due to a constriction around the omentum, one cause not determined, and a case of intussusception). He described the latter case, in a 26-year old man—“uncommon in adults.”

An Editorial commented on the state legislature’s proposal to license chiropractors—a bill that the Medical Society opposed, and that did not pass.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, FEBRUARY 1961

The Milk Commission Report of the Providence Medical Association, with John T. Barrett, MD, Chair, named the approved dairies supplying milk to Rhode Islanders: “All the herds are under State and Federal supervision and are free from tuberculosis and *Brucella abortus* infection.” Six years previously, the commission discontinued the sale of raw certified milk.

Herbert Ebner, MD, Gerald Solomons, MD, and HJ Mac-Millan, MD, in “Treatment of Respiratory Distress of the New-born with Human Fibrinolysin: Preliminary Report,” discussed research supported by a grant from Wyeth Laboratories. Each year 20,000 newborns died from hyaline membrane disease, especially “premature infants, those delivered by Caesarean section, and

those born of diabetic mothers.” Prior results with guinea pigs had shown promise. The authors nebulized Actase into incubators of four infants with respiratory distress and discussed the results.

In “The Problem of Unexplained Upper Gastrointestinal Bleeding,” Roman R. Pe’er, MD, Head, Department of Surgery, Poriah Hospital, Israel, and Surgeon-in-Chief, pro-tempore, Miriam Hospital, discussed a 33-year old teacher and mother who fainted on her way to school. She was brought to the hospital in a state of shock. The author “needed exploratory laparotomy to make a diagnosis.”

An Editorial, “Are These Drugs Sold Under Generic Names?” criticized a *Providence Journal* article (November 21, 1960), “Cost of Medicine.” The article criticized physicians for “a lack of zeal in effecting savings” by prescribing brand-name, rather than generic, drugs. The Editor pointed to the *Providence Journal’s* advertisements for patent medicines: “We submit that if these newspapers which profess such a strong interest in the medical welfare of its readers are sincere, and furthermore are as independent of the influence of its advertising...they will forthwith stop this disreputable disregard of the interests of its readers.”

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, FEBRUARY 1986

Richard Carleton, MD, at Memorial Hospital, had led a two-day “Mini-Residency for State Officials,” sponsored by the Rhode Island Medical Society. “From the physician’s viewpoint, persons involved in [payment, regulation, review] may seem to ignore important parts of the health care delivery system and rely on only statistical and abstract data in making decision.” Day one included going on rounds with physicians, attending an ethics discussion, attending a surgical mortality and morbidity conference, and observing cases in the emergency room, intensive care unit and obstetrical unit. At 9 pm, day one ended, and participants left with homework: to discuss one case in light of ethics, medical decisions, malpractice, cost and quality, with a proposed solution in each area.

Ian Rockett, PhD, William H. Hollinshead, MD, MPH, and Ellice Lieberman, MD, MPH, in “A Statewide Motor Vehicle Injury Surveillance System,” reported that “ER vehicular injury cases are heavily weighted toward adolescents, younger adults and males.” The research was based on a 25% sample form all ERs in 1981 and 1982.

H. Gerald Rock, MD, and Katherine Whalen, MD, in “Management of the Emergency Department in a Community Hospital,” described the two-track triage at Kent County Memorial Hospital.

Jeffrey O’Connell, LLB, in “A New Approach to Medical Malpractice Insurance,” encouraged no-fault insurance or a contractual agreement.