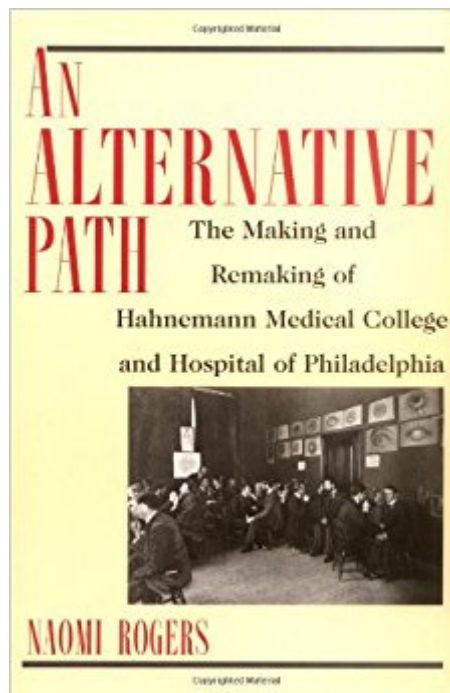


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An Alternative Path: The Making And Remaking Of Hahnemann Medical College And Hospital



Synopsis

When Hahnemann Medical College was founded in Philadelphia in 1848, it was the only institution in the world to offer an M. D. degree in homeopathy, a therapeutic and intellectual alternative to orthodox medicine. This institutional history situates Hahnemann in the broader context of American social changes and chronicles its continual remaking in response to the rise of corporate medicine and constant changes in the Philadelphia community. In the nineteenth century, Hahnemann provided a distinctive and respected identity for its faculty, students, and supporters. In the early twentieth century, it accepted students denied admission elsewhere, especially Jewish and Italian students. It taught a flexible homeopathy that facilitated curricular changes remarkably similar to those at the best contemporary orthodox schools, including selective assimilation of the new experimental sciences, laboratory training, experience in the school's own teaching hospital, and a lengthened course of medical study. Hahnemann is no longer homeopathic, although it remained loyal to its alternative heritage long after the 1910 Flexner Report attempted to eliminate alternative medical education in America. Like many other American medical schools, Hahnemann has had its share of problems, financial and otherwise. The civil rights and radical student movements of the 1960s and 70s, however, pushed the College into a more politically conscious view of itself as a health care provider to the inner city and as a producer of health professionals. In 1993, the College merged with another Philadelphia medical school into a single health care and training institution called the Allegheny University of the HealthSciences. Although Hahnemann is now part of a new system of academic medicine, its institutional legacy endures, as it has in the past, by following alternative paths.

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I was on the Hahnemann faculty during part of the history described here. The account matches all the stories I heard over the years. Unfortunately, the story doesn't end with this book in the late 1990s. Hahnemann went on to bankruptcy after merging with the Medical College of PA and Allegheny Health care. It was an amazing time. One aspect of the book includes the great tales of medical practice in Philadelphia. There was turmoil for 200 years and Hahnemann played a unique role as a Homeopathic school and hospital. Working at Hahnemann, Jefferson, Penn, Temple or MCP was like working for a local high school, with rivalries and "home-town" political conflicts with the other local schools. When working at Hahnemann, I knew I was working at a place. It was just as important to know the ward clerk and other "go to" people as it was to have access to a prominent attending. This sense of place has been lost in modern, factory medicine.

Since my grandfather was a student and, later a teacher at Hahnemann, and now has his picture hanging in Washington, I had a particular interest in the history of the school he attended. The book was well written and very informative. It discusses the development of not only homeopathy, but also the development of the general practice of medicine in this country. I found the book to be well written and not dry, as it could have been. If you are interested in the history of our country, this gives an inside look at one of the most important professions in our evolution as a people - keeping us alive.

As a member of Hahnemann's experimental review committee that unsuccessfully tried to block the infamous CO2 heroin treatment project, that was rammed through by the then hospital president, Shober (later fired), I was delighted to come across this detailed colorful history of a wonderful Philadelphia Hospital that has managed to overcome the scandalous Shober years and thrive.

It is the best book to be forwarded to the students all over the world

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