Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

"Show and Tell" at August 6 DCAGS Meeting

What piqued your interest in family history? It could be many things, but sometimes there is an ancestor you discover that really grabs your attention. At the DCAGS August 6 meeting, we have a "Show and Tell" planned where you will have a chance to tell about an ancestor you would have liked to meet. What is it that makes him or her so interesting? What would you have liked to ask him or her? We ask that you share what is it that

makes this person so interesting to you.

Please limit your presentation to 5-7 minutes. If you would like to share a short electronic presentation or a picture with the group we can arrange to have that scanned/loaded for projection with enough notice. We ask that you email Rollie Littlewood, rklittle@wisc.edu, or call him at (608) 273-0211 ahead of time so a list of presenters can

be prepared.

It is always great fun to share something about your genealogy with people, so tell us about an ancestor you would have liked to meet at our August 6 meeting.

We are back at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 4505 Regent Street, Madison, WI. Please join us on Thursday, August 6 at 7:00 P.M.

Mark your Calendars!

DCAGS Genealogy Fair

Saturday, October 10

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
4505 Regent, Madison, WI

Family Health Information and the Genealogist

Perils and possibilities for assembling personal and family medical histories were laid out for us in great detail by Professor Catherine Arnott Smith of UW-Madison School of Library and Information Studies at a picnic meeting earlier this month. Her topic was *Family Health Information and the Genealogist.*

The good news is that the medical records field is catching up on terminology standard-ization. This, backed by a White House priority for across-the-board digitalization, should help make our future efforts for accuracy less complex.

But the bad news is that for long-ago family accounts and death certificates, there was no such thing as a standardized national list of diagnoses. Such records first existed in 1933 and it wasn't until 1955 that the first hospital charting with codes appeared. Even now, efforts at

standardizing morbidity lists are subject to review and change.

To help us through the maze, Professor Smith left us with several online aids which are listed at the end of this article.

Although her research interests lie in medical and personal health records – not genealogy – Professor Smith nevertheless has suggestions for us, including some time-honored sources - obits, family lore, baby books, mortality schedules and death certificates. The latter suggestions might pose one of three problems, Professor Smith pointed out.

1) Did the cause-of-death terminology come from a physician? Even if yes, almost certainly it did not have a standardized meaning that can be trusted today.

2) The medical term on a

death certificate may have originated with a physician but could have been translated by the physician into terms he/she thought the patient's family would understand - this still happens today. Or, the term might have never originated with a physician but expressed by the patient's family members and transmitted to the census taker.

3) Meanings of medical words change as scientific understanding of disease changes, whether the data came from a physician or a layperson.

From Professor Smith's script, here is a discussion of the history and progress of medical disease coding: The medical record is a feature of patient care at least as old as the Codex Hammurabi of Babylon in use about 3,700 years ago.

The oldest form of medical record that patients interacted with is the patient-held record, or medical information of which the patient is in control. The information may be physically carried on the patient's person, or may be simply easily accessible. An example of an older form is the baby book, which dates from the early 20th century. Other examples include Medic-Alert bracelets and laser-readable insurance cards.

Where are we today? Recent data shows that only .3% of the approximately 5,000 nonfederal US hospitals being tracked are "truly paperless." Figures for individual physician's practices vary by specialty, but the nationwide average is about 18 percent.

A key point to take from a discussion of electronic medical records (EMRs) is that however this technology plays out, these are records that are focused around the healthcare provider, the employer, the payer, and the supplier, not the consumer.

With an emerging shift in emphases, the consumer is now at the center of healthcare strategies; Professor Smith credits the Web for much of this progress.

A newer development involves Personal History Records (PHRs), but their definition is still unclear. But for starters, PHR may be considered an application "to help a person gather, store, manage and share data."

The PHR enables consumer contribution to a record that can be shared with healthcare providers, whether that record is "tethered" to the official medical record or exists as a standalone system. The PHR allows the consumer to permit access to that record by others in time of need. The potential benefits basically all fit under the umbrella term "empowering."

Potential savings

Widespread adoption of data-compatible personal health records could save the U.S. health care system more than $19 billion annually after expenses, according to a new study from the Center for Information Technology Leadership at Partners

Healthcare System in Boston. They found that providing PHRs to 80% of the U.S. population would cost $3.7 billion in startup costs and $1.9 billion in annual maintenance but that widespread PHR adoption would lead to savings of more than $21 billion annually, most being accrued by payers.

Here are some examples of PHRs that are considered "cutting-edge" and show the different ways PHR initiatives can play out. They are:

DOSSIA – a not-for-profit with government funding. Companies participating include Intel, Children's Hospital Boston, AT&T, BP, Wal-Mart, Cardinal Health, Pitney Bowes, Sanofi-aventis, Applied Materials. This includes a lifelong electronic medical record, and potentially serves 2.5 million people.

Kaiser Permanente – very large, very significant HMO. Kaiser Permanente was the first HMO, emerging out of coverage for workers during World War II. Their benefits include access to MyHealth Manager, which links PHRs to an EMR system.

MyChart - used at many clinics nationally, including Group Health Cooperative here. MyChart and MyHealth Manager were both developed by Epic Systems, which is headquartered here in Dane County.

Google Health – Its purpose is to build online health profiles, enter health conditions, medications, allergies, and lab results into your Google Health profile by importing medical records from hospitals and pharmacies. You can even create multiple profiles for family members or others you care for. Choose from a list of Google Health partners to see if your hospital or pharmacy can send copies of your medical records or prescriptions to your Google Health profile. This way, you can save an accurate history of your medical conditions, medications, and test results all in one place.

This will help coordinate care and share health records with

individuals in your care network - family members, friends and doctors. You can stop sharing at any time and will always be able to see who has access to your information. You can also print a wallet-sized version of your health profile to share with your doctor or family members in person.

Browse the online health services directory to find services that are integrated with Google Health.

WebMD Personal Health Record – Similar to Google Health. This is a freebie from the WebMD Health Corp. It uses a master health profile to integrate data from multiple sources.

Microsoft's HealthVault is not a PHR! It's an environment – a way for individuals to collect, store, and share their health information. It is a shared data platform that allows multiple applications to work with a person's health data to improve health management and outcomes. HealthVault now features an online tool which will be branded as the Mayo Clinic Health Manager. It won't connect to the Mayo clinical EMR system at all.

Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative – Healthcare professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. Tracing the illnesses suffered by parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy.

When you are finished organizing your family history information, the Family Health Portrait tool will create and print out a graphical representation of your family's generations and the health disorders that may have moved from one generation to the next. That is a powerful tool for predicting diseases for which you may be at risk. Your health care provider can help you make

Upcoming events

Passages Through Time Federation of Genealogical Societies

When: September 2-5, 2009

Where: Little Rock Convention Center, Little Rock, AR

Cost: $225 post-July 2; costs do not include meals

Registration: For information go to: http://www.fgs.org

Walworth County Genealogical Society and Burlington Genealogical Society present Family History Fair

When: Saturday, September 26, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Where: Faith Christian School, W5525 Hwy 67, Williams Bay, WI

Guest Speakers: Craig Pfannkuche and Clark Kidder

Admission is Free.

President's Message:
Genealogical Learning Opportunities Coming Our Way

Our society's Governing Board strives to bring us worthwhile learning opportunities every month. The August DCAGS program is described elsewhere in this newsletter. Three rather special opportunities are coming our way in September and October.

There is a long-standing tradition that Jim Hansen, reference librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society library archives, talks to us about "What's New at the Wisconsin Historical Society" once every year. Somehow this got skipped in 2008, but it is back for 2009. Jim wants to depart a bit from the usual format this time. He will discuss some of the recent WHS library developments at our 3 September meeting, but then he wants to open the forum up for questions. The theme he suggested is "Stump Jim Hansen!" Be thinking of questions you would like to ask the man who has heard nearly every genealogical question there is. Note that "Where's my family's genealogy?" will not be allowed!

On 10 October we will hold a genealogy fair, much like the very successful fair we sponsored in 2007. (There will be no regular first Thursday meeting in October.) You should expect great opportunities to learn about many genealogical resources in the region. Details will appear later in this newsletter, so I won't elaborate more now.

On 2 & 3 October, the weekend before our genealogy fair in Madison, the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society (WSGS) will sponsor its fall seminar in Neenah. The theme will be Research: Do More and Do It Better. Michael John Neill, a very entertaining speaker from Galesburg, Illinois, will present the Saturday session. His lectures are always rich in examples and details. More about his background can be seen at his website, <rootdig.com>. Reviving a WSGS tradition, there will also be a limited-registration pre-conference workshop on the Friday afternoon before the seminar. Lori Bessler, outreach coordinator and microforms librarian of the WHS library archives, and David Michael McDonald, CG[SM] – both of whom have given talks at recent DCAGS meetings – will be the speakers at the workshop. More information, including titles and abstracts of all the lectures and access to registration forms, is available on the WSGS website, <wsgs.org>, or on our website, <dcags.org>.

Neenah is near the north end of Lake Winnebago, a two-hour drive from Madison. For your planning, know that the Saturday seminar starts early (vendor exhibits open at 7:30 am) and ends early (3:15 pm, giving ample opportunity to return home before dark). If you don't want to be a (very!) early riser on the day of the seminar, hotel accommodations are available at the seminar site.

Family Health Information and the Genealogist Cont…

use of this information. If you prefer to use a paper version of the tool to gather and record your family information, printable PDFs are available in several languages.

For Electronic Health Records (EHRs) to be useful, products like Family Health History need to be compatible so they can be embedded in EHRs, or in PHRs.

Asking for feedback from the audience, Professor Smith elicited several stories about family health histories and diseases and the detective work necessary to pin down accurate accounts.

Sources and Sites

MyPHR.com has a lot of information about setting up a personal health record. It says 'dot com' but it is actually a website run by a professional association of medical records managers; they aren't trying to sell anything.

MyHealthEVet - http://www.myhealth.va.gov/. This is the site where one can set up a personal health record, including a family history section, created by the Veterans Administration, but open to non-vets as well as vets.

The Surgeon General's website specifically for creating a family history -- http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/

Physician's Handbook of Practice, and Memoranda for 1858: a classified list of diseases with their symptoms, complications, etc. by William Elmer and Levi Reuben. Published: New York, Stringer & Townsend, 1858.

Another valuable resource was suggested by George Findlen, CG[SM]. –*The Robley Dunglison's Medical Lexicon, A Dictionary of Medical Science,* published in 1865. It is available on CD at this site: http://www.archivecdbooksusa.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product_Code=US0226&Category_Code=ALPHAD&Product_Count=103

Shirley Levine

I urge you to strongly consider attending one or both days of the WSGS Fall Seminar.

Rollie Littlewood

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Address Service Requested

We're on the Web!
See us at: www.dcags.org
!

**Dane County Area
Genealogical Society**

P.O. Box 5652
Madison, WI 53705-0652

See you
August 6!

We have a new web
address: www.dcags.org/

If you enter the address it
will take you to the group's
website on Rootsweb.

DCAGS officers for 2009:

President: Rollie Littlewood
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Vice President: Don Cole

Secretary: Gerry Schlecht
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Treasurer: Walker Crawford
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Past President, Pat Skubis
p3l8skubis@hughes.net

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: William "Bill" Baures
bauresb@juno.com

Programs & Education: Vacant

Public Relations: Vacant

Historian: Sandy Zart
sandy_zart@yahoo.com

Web Master: Rollie Littlewood
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Newsletter: Ruth Simpson
rsimpson@terracom.net

Membership Directories

By now all of you should have
received your directory. Please take a
moment to review your information to
ensure that it is correct. It was also
pointed out that I did not leave
enough of a left margin for those of
you that three-hole punch your
directory. If you would like a revised
copy with a left margin, have any
corrections or have general ideas for
improvement, please let me know at
walker@viridis.ws or 206.3182. These
are intended to serve your needs so
I'm happy to incorporate ideas into
future editions.

Walker Crawford