

THE VALUE OF CASE REPORTS IN STUDYING THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

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The University of Tartu Museum has an extensive case reports collection comprising of medical case histories from the University's Clinic of Internal Diseases spanning from 1847 till 1962, and Professor Juhan Aul's anthropology measurement papers of from 1930 till 1960.

The museum was given the University's Clinic of Internal Diseases case histories collection in 1980 by Kuno Kõrge, the then professor and physician at the University of Tartu's Clinic of Internal Diseases (10, 34). The case files had been kept in the basement of the clinic for decades (12). The collection had been maintained by the clinic's archive division and looked after by professor Kõrge who had published a selection of papers on the history of medicine based on the records (11). In his research, Professor Kõrge focused on the changing pattern of diagnosis, but his personal notes indicate that he believed the highest value of these documents to be historiographical of not only Estonian medicine, but of academic medicine (12). The papers are separated into 700 folders; 1847 till 1860 are all in one folder, as the amount is very small and the case files relatively thin, but by the 1960s a single year can consist of an average of 40 folders, with approximately 3500 thousand case files. There are some complications with the actual amount of the cases files - the last paper written about the collection was done by Ela Martis, the late director of the museum, in the year 2000 for the Oxford publication *History of Universities* (14). In the article Martis lists the number of case histories to circa 25,000, but our work conducted since the summer of 2016 shows that the number is much more likely

to be closer to 100,000. Due to resource management and funding the museum has only been able to properly research and categorize the papers up until 1885.

The Clinic of Internal Diseases was created in the early 19th century, with an initial bed count of 10 (4). Various accounts list the annual patient number as 200 by the 1850s, and 500 by the turn of the century (4). The case files that have been categorized are from the period when the University of Tartu (then the Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat) attracted high ranking academics and physicians from across Europe. Physicians such as Ernst von Bergmann, Nikolai Pirogov, Alexander Schmidt to name a few, all did their rounds at the clinic and it is their medical students writing the case files (15). The case files include not only family histories and treatment records, but also dissection papers, cardiograms, temperature measurements and so forth. They are a vast source of information on the changing face of medical diagnosis from a period when science and hospitals were taking over patients' health management. They also reflect the changing face of the medical community in the small state: the clinic staff was international, as the university students doing their rounds and practicing medicine came from all over Europe. While the majority of the patients were Estonians, there were patients from neighbouring countries as well. The case reports' design reflects that of French and German documentation at the time (6, p 298-9), which is not surprising considering the universities origin as a Baltic-German institute to prevent Baltic-Germans from entering European universities in the late 18th and early 19th century so as to stop revolutionary ideas being brought back.

Professor Juhan Aul (1897-1994) is the father of anthropology studies in Estonia, but he also pioneered biometrics and data analysis in the country (5). Almost all of the anthropology measurements in this analysis were made by him (13). His research focused on Estonians - men, women, children and adolescents, and for comparison purposes Swedes, Germans, Russians and minority nationalities such as Latvians, Votes and Izhorians (5). He compiled three works from the data: *Antropologija Estoncev* (1), *Eesti naise antropoloogia* (2) and *Eesti kooliõpilaste antropoloogia* (3). The anthropology collection consists of 50,000 anthropological measurements conducted in the 1930s and measurements sent to Aul in the 1940s and 1970s of Estonian schoolchildren from the schools themselves that were conducted with medical forms for data collection.

Anthropological measurement of Estonians started in the 1920-1930 and Aul's first focus was to measure 15,000 young men, which was followed by genotypic analysis of their racial classification (5). His research continued from

there well into the 1980s. Considering the fact that there were severe political changes in the country, including the annexation of Estonia into the Soviet Union, it can be considered quite an achievement that he was allowed to conduct his research in a relatively free environment. The collection at the museum has recently caught public interest again –Professor Peeter Hõrak and Ph.D. candidate Markus Valge have published multiple collaborative papers based on Aul's data (7)(8)(9). The focus has shifted now to doing comparative measurements with the adult subjects, and to create the analysis based on health statistics that also reflect the health, life and cultural choices of the subjects. In addition, the Estonian Genome Centre at the University of Tartu, which was established in the year 2000 to improve the public health in Estonia and has collected over 50,000 samples from the 1.3 million population, provides also the opportunity to combine anthropological data with the genome data. Surprisingly enough this has not yet cause ethical debates in the society and has been viewed with an overall favourable light.

Both collections provide the same issue for the museum – sensitive public data. Our hope is to make the internal medicine clinic case files up until the end of WWI available via the Estonian Museums Public Portal (MUIS) to researchers around the world by scanning them. The large-scale scanning will most likely start in the spring of 2019. The subjects of Aul's measurements are still alive and as such the documents will not be made publically available, but materials for data analysis and medical research are available for researchers if probable cause can be ascertained.

Case histories, may they be from clinics or anthropological, provide a look into a different time. In collaboration with historical research into the timeframe, it is possible to research conditions and attitudes among others. Medical case histories not only provide an overview of the treatment and diagnosis but also attitudes and perspectives of physicians from a multitude of backgrounds. The anthropological data, collected in the time of eugenics and by a eugenicist provides a view into a world that is not yet forgotten as we still wish to use the data for the same intent it was collected for – to better the race. Case histories are on a fragile ground at any institute or museum, their value constantly fluctuating in the eyes of those whose financial decisions could axe their existence. The University of Tartu Museum will focus on preserving the documentation for future generations to the best of our abilities and argue their case whenever need be.

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