

**THE MUSEUM OF MEDICINE OF THE SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL:  
A SPACE FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE OF MODERN MEDICINE IN KOREA**

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In the West, medical museums have played an important role in medical education and research for centuries (1, 2). Western medicine was introduced to Korea only after the Opening of Ports to Western countries in 1876 through missionaries of Europe and United States, and Japanese military doctors. In 1885 King Gojong, who dreamed of modernization of Korea, founded Jejungwon (House of Universal Relief), Korea's first state-run modern hospital to providing health care for the poor and the people. Inherited its legacy, Daehan Hospital was built in 1908 as the national hospital with the Japanese technique and capital. The oldest Western-style hospital building in Korea, Daehan Hospital has since grown into today as the Seoul National University Hospital (SNUH). The main building of Daehan Hospital (Great Korean Hospital, Historic Site No. 248) located in the center of the Seoul National University Hospital campus, now serves as the Museum of Medicine (3, 4). The special feature of the Museum of Medicine is its location and its historicity.

As South Korea achieved rapid economic growth from the ruins of the Korean War, in January 1990, Korean Ministry of Culture was established. Its "10-year Cultural Development Plan" included 'building up 1,000 museums' as a

part of national policy (Ministry of Culture, 10-Year Plan for Cultural Development, 1990). Public interest in museum increased as it renewed the value as an institution for experiential learning through the five senses, intuition education through the real, non-formal education which does not preclude people due to the limits of age, gender, or education (5). For the purpose of improving accessibility, the national policy promoted establishment of museums from the 1990s, and various forms of national, public and private museums were established everywhere.

The Museum of Medicine was established in 1992 with the aim of preserving, researching and exhibiting historical relics and documents. Its heritage preservation includes literature, articles, medical devices, drugs, public health posters for parasites or tuberculosis eradication, population control, and artefacts related to modern Korean history of medicine. In 2007 the Museum of Medicine expanded into the Institute of Medical History and Culture as an independent organization, to mark the centennial of Daehan Hospital and the 122<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Jejungwon. Since then, the Museum of Medicine has been integrated into the Institute, along with the Institute of Medical History and the Medical Archives. In addition to previous function of preservation and exhibition, the Institute has embraced renewed function of research, communication with the public, communication with other museums, education for students, and above all, providing a space for the source community participation, i.e., a space for culture and humanities for suffering patients, their families and the hospital workers.

The research of the Institute mainly focused upon history and medicine in East Asia. Through international symposium, East Asian historians of medicine got together from China, Taiwan, Japan, and United States of America. The titles include as following: Introduction of Western Modern Medicine in East Asia and Role of the State; A Key Tune of Japanese Colonial Medicine in Taiwan; War and Medicine in East Asia, 1937-1953; Japanese Biological Warfare and the 731st Unit during 15 Years' War (1931-1945) and its Legacies and Lessons; The First Blood Bank in China: The Transfer, Acceptance and Influence of a New Medical Technology in Wartime.

Key activities for communication with the public comprise exhibitions and public education. There has also been a big change in the way of exhibition. Having introduced graphic, illustrations, models, images, and other forms to help spectators can experience and understand the exhibits by using reproductions (5). A viewer interacts with the exhibition through hands and

minds while using a combination of sensory organs such as seeing, touching, and hearing. It is in this context that they are taking the hands-on exhibition, which can be touched directly especially for children. The Museum of Medicine had a series of exhibitions which invited rich interaction between the museum visitors and exhibitions. For example, with the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, the exhibition "Listen, Smell, Breathe and Speak," provided the visitors how human sensory and vocal organs work and how medical specialties developed to understand the normal and pathological function and to treat diseases of these organs. Education for school children in the Museum of Medicine also involves medical diagnostics so that they can experience how the doctors diagnose diseases with the help of diagnostic tools such as stethoscope.

The exhibition as a narrative also describes historical knowledge and generates meaning through artefacts (6, 7). In 2010 June 25, the Museum of Medicine had "Special Exhibition of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Korean War, Doctors Stand at the Border of Life and Death." Korean War left indelible trauma and consequent division of families and nation to Korean people. What do we create and share as collective memory of the medical professionals at the Museum of Medicine on the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Korean War? In the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Korean War, the Museum of Medicine exhibited with drugs, medical devices and operating tables used in battle fields, photos and narratives of medical doctors struggling to save lives in the battle fields facing casualties. The Museum exhibition aiming at visualization of Korean War history, the historical knowledge generated may be replaced with the collective memory. For those who experienced the war as doctors, soldiers or civilians shared the meaning of the war and medicine, and the collective memories about it. For the younger generation, the exhibition delivered historical knowledge and the collective memories about which the young generation never had first-hand experience. In this respect, the exhibition transforms active spectators from different generations through communication with narratives based on the historical knowledge and cultural tools.

The Museum of Medicine also communicates with other museums. When holding a special exhibition, "Childbirth as Medicine" in 2017, to make people experience childbirth in history and present, encountering childbirth as medicine in East and in West, in the section of history of Western medicine, we exhibited midwife's tale in the 18<sup>th</sup> America with obstetric forceps and speculum from the western medical history. On the other side, special device and instruments used for safe childbirth by Korean Traditional Medicine doctors also were displayed. The Royal Palace handled placenta and umbilical cords of

Princes with special customs for their health and glories, while ordinary people employed folklore instruments of taboos and symbols to prevent illness and bad lucks to newborns. For that exhibition, we communicated with the National Folk Museum of Korea (8), and the National Palace Museum.

Education for students is one of the important functions of the Museum of Medicine. Several foundations, Municipality, Seoul City Hall, and Ministries support the Museum to provide various groups of citizens, students in primary and secondary schools with medical history and culture education in the museum. The first-year medical students taking history of medicine course regularly visit museum as a part of the curriculum. Nursing students in Nursing College also visit the exhibition of the Museum of Medicine once a year.

Lastly, the most important function of the Museum of Medicine is providing a space for the source community participation. If we see museum exhibitions and issues from the point of view of source community, the most important notion of the term is that "the members of the source community have legitimate morality, ownership, or cultural milestones in museum collections." (9, 213). If the Museum of Medicine has a new perspective of 'source community,' the exhibition should have the voice and the participation of the patients, their families and the hospital workers. Without reflection, the previous exhibitions in medical museums, the patients were often the objects of the narratives, and the medical doctors at the center of the narratives with legitimate morality or ownership as they used to be in the medical culture in hospitals. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the patients are no more "the Other" in hospital culture. An exhibition at the Museum of Medicine focused on the stories, memories, and voices of the patients, their families and the hospital workers (10). The visitors are often patients and their families, and through exhibition they shared patients' life stories of hardship as an orphan or a widow and suffering from the poverty in post-war Korea. The exhibition included their illness experience and sublimation of their agony into art, music composition, altruistic donation, or helping other patients. The stories include lives at the hospital of many workers - nurses, janitors, washing ladies, cooks, orderlies, technicians, etc. In the exhibition hall flowed a music composed by a previous cancer patient, who composed the music inspired by the beauty of the museum building (clock tower) when he was hospitalized. On the wall of the exhibition hall were paintings of the museum building drawn by children patients. The museum is a space for culture and humanities for suffering patients, their families and the hospital workers. In the future, appearance of source community should be a critical role to form a new frame in exhibition.

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