

# Collegium Aesculapium The Brigham Young University Academy of Medicine

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**M**any have, for a long time, been asking Brigham Young University to establish an association of LDS physicians. Manfred R. Nelson, M.D., Chief Surgeon, Emergency Room, Hill Air Force Base, expressed a widespread feeling when he said, "I have been hoping for many years that we could have an association where we could exchange ideas with professionals of our own faith."

Roger L. Hiatt, M.D., Director of Ophthalmology at the Medical School, University of Tennessee, reminded us that "we have much to contribute to the world and this academy is just what we need."

As A. Neal de Gaston, M.D., Ph.D., Norco, California, said, "We have all waited a long time for this." Collegium Aesculapium has been organized to meet the expressed needs of physicians who are members or friends of the LDS Church and who wish to associate and serve with friends and colleagues of high moral and ethical integrity.

One of the forces for the formation of Collegium Aesculapium was an association of LDS ophthalmologists. For the past four or five years, they have been holding a family home evening dinner on Monday night in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Start-

ing with just a few friends, the event grew until last year more than forty people gathered at a dinner at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco.

Realizing that physicians in other specialties were also interested in forming an association, the group asked some of their members to approach BYU officials with the proposal to sponsor an academy of LDS physicians.

The original planning meeting was called under the direction of Bruce Woolley, Pharm.D., on June 18, 1982, at BYU. Physicians from several specialties and other interested individuals were invited to participate. The results of this steering committee culminated in the formal organization of Collegium Aesculapium, the BYU Academy of Medicine, on October 16, 1982, on the Brigham Young University campus under the sponsorship of the Alumni Association, the College of Biology and Agriculture, and University Health Services.

The name Collegium Aesculapium was suggested by Bruce Woolley, our executive vice-president. Because the temples of Aesculapius were sanctuaries of healing in ancient Greece, the name *Aesculapius* became synonymous with physician/healer.

The original name suggested was the LDS Academy of Medicine. However, since the LDS Academy of Den-

tists had been asked to change their name to the BYU Academy of Dentists, we followed their model.

Some people have been confused about the academy. Its purpose is not to form a new medical school nor engage in political activities. Nor is the primary purpose fund raising. It is not for BYU graduates alone but for all LDS physicians and those who wish to associate with others of similar beliefs. It is not just a Utah regional group but a worldwide association. We offer our services to the Church but do not presume to initiate or carry out any Church-related program or activities unless invited.

Collegium Aesculapium is organized to serve primarily (1) physicians and their families, (2) education, (3) the Church, if called upon, and (4) the world community. Let us look at each of these groups in more detail.

First, the Collegium is of service to the medical profession. The LDS physician is an individual with the potential to make a unique contribution. Like others in the medical profession, LDS doctors face an increasingly complex future impacted by high technology and changing social values. In addition to maintaining high standards of skill and ethics in their practice, LDS physicians also face the challenge of balancing their professional responsibilities with Church and family responsibilities.

The academy's purpose is to provide educational and social interchange regionally, nationally, and internationally among its members in a manner which cannot be obtained under the umbrella of any other organization. It will also be a sponsoring organization for members who wish to serve local or international groups.

Since the time the academy was organized, membership has been growing steadily. The first semiannual meeting was held in Park City, Utah, on February 9-12, 1983. The intent of such meetings is to offer instructions on general topics of interest to all, while also offering opportunities for the needs of individual members to be met. The meetings are a vehicle for sharing common interests and problems with particular emphasis on medical/ethical questions of interest to LDS physicians and their families. Selected proceedings of the meetings are published in this journal.

Future meetings will cover topics of general interest, such as international health, life as a value, and the ethics of research. The Collegium will provide a forum for discussions and fellowship for the LDS physician and encourage specialty groups to meet together at their professional meetings.

For those practicing in isolated areas or alone, this organization offers a support system of brothers and sisters with similar beliefs. For those facing the difficult ethical responsibilities of life and death, research, and counseling, the organization provides a chance to share and exchange ideas.

The second major goal of the academy is to assist LDS students throughout the world who are interested in medicine.

The academy can be a resource of strength to medical students and students in health-related careers as well as to medical students and physicians in training, through advising them and helping them with professional, economic, and social needs. The academy can also serve as a resource in helping such people locate employment.

The intent of the Collegium is not

to duplicate or replace any health-service organization, but to coordinate our goals. Some of the organizations which we are already working with are the Academy of Dentists and the Benson Institute, which is working to improve life through agriculture, nutrition, sanitation, and other means.

As a third major goal, the academy and individual LDS physicians, upon request, will offer their services to the Church.

Church doctrine gives a unique perspective on the concept of the whole man and how physical needs are all related to human freedom and human values. This perspective forms the basis for service.

Many physicians now serve as missionaries, members, and leaders in their home wards, branches, and stakes. The academy can be called upon as a resource through promoting understanding of proven health practices and helping people acquire appropriate health-related skills.

Physical health is one of the six areas of personal and family preparedness which the Church is stressing to help members improve their temporal well-being. The Welfare Service Program encourages members with special talents to volunteer their services to promote preparedness (Welfare Service Handbook, 23). Specialists in the academy could be called upon to prepare pamphlets to deal with particular health problems or assist with the international drug information center, which identifies the drugs used in various countries with their comparable entities in the United States. Furthermore, the academy could form a clearing house to which members could send journals, books, medications, and equipment which could then be distributed to areas where they are needed.

As a fourth major goal the academy will provide an avenue of service to people and groups nationally and internationally through health education and direct service.

The members of the academy hope to help fulfill a motto of BYU, "The World Is Our Campus," through

various service projects throughout the world. Resources of the Collegium consist of the thousands of members or potential members who are physicians, educators, and Church leaders. Furthermore, the thousands of LDS people engaged in allied health professions could also be an important resource in furthering the goals. The academy could be a catalyst for an international training program in public health and international medicine. Although many of the members will be specialists in various fields of medicine, a central focus of their service will be to promote preventive and family health care throughout the world.

The academy will sponsor special travel study programs for brothers and sisters to travel and meet with members and nonmembers throughout the world to render direct medical help, education, or other services. Many physicians and members of the academy individually have already become involved in efforts to serve underprivileged areas of the world.

In March of 1983 the Collegium sent forty cases of penicillin and other antibiotics to the people of Ecuador at the request of the Secretary of Health and Agriculture.

Many LDS physicians have an ability to see the whole man in terms of the emotional and spiritual as well as the physical. It is through this gospel perspective that they are in a unique position to give support to each other, to promote education, and to serve the Church and the world. They desire to put the teachings of the gospel into their daily lives. In the words of Mosiah:

I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. (Mosiah 4:26)