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Historical Research Project Outline

Title: The History of Medicine in Yuma

Thesis: The history of medicine is a significant to Yuma, because it describes what medicine was, is, and is transforming into. One learns from the past and creates the future. When researchers and readers study the history of medicine in Yuma, they learn that medicine impacts the culture and the culture impacts medicine. Medicine and history are vital parts of the community.

1. Introduction

a. Hook/Background - In the year 1849, Dr. Abel Lincoln, an Army surgeon, passed through the Yuma Crossing on a military expedition. One year later, he returned and practiced medicine for the Indians; he was the first documented medical doctor in Yuma, Arizona. That same year, he saw an opportunity to make supplement his income by running a ferry. However, later that year he was killed for his success and growing fortune from the ferry business. This account begins the documented history of medicine in Yuma.

b. Thesis - The history of medicine is a significant to Yuma, because it describes what medicine was, is, and is transforming into. One learns from the past and creates the future. When researchers and readers study the history of medicine in Yuma, they learn that medicine impacts the culture and the culture impacts medicine. Medicine and history are vital parts of the community.

II. Background - Dr. Arnabar and Dr. DeCorse

a. Introductory statement: In 1861, eleven years after the unfortunate demise of Dr. Lincoln, Dr. Candido Arnabar arrived in Yuma. He practiced medicine for all the people in Yuma.

A. Birth in Spain

B. Graduation from University of Madrid, and then work in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, San Francisco, San Diego, and eventually Yuma.

C. Mexico Incident

D. Yuma County Physician

E. Death on April 4th, 1877

b. In 1868, one year after Dr. Arnabar’s death, Dr. DeCorse in search of ore mines, arrived in Yuma, Arizona.

c. He arrived during an epidemic of smallpox, and set up a practice to provide medicine to the citizens of Yuma.

A. First doctor for railroad, prison, county, Indians, school

d. Finishing statement for 2nd paragraph – While Dr. DeCorse spent hours practicing medicine and caring for his patients, he never gave up his love for mining. To provide him more time to go exploring the hills of southern Arizona, he requested that his friend and colleague Dr. Taggart come to practice in Yuma, Arizona, too.

III. Dr. Taggart

a. Introductory Statement - In response to Dr. DeCorse’s request, Dr. Taggart moved to Yuma, Arizona in 1874.

A. Dr. Taggart, like Dr. DeCorse, also had his hobbies. He was very interested in agriculture and often experimented on cotton, grapes, and figs.

B. He, also, served as the Yuma County Treasurer and Fish commissioner.

b. Closing statement - Dr. DeCorse and Dr. Taggart practiced together for seventeen years; they were the first medical group in Yuma. For two of the seventeen years, they practiced as the only doctors in Yuma.

IV. Doctors from 1876 to 1910

a. Introductory statement - In 1876, the fourth doctor to come to Yuma arrived, Dr. Henry Price. From 1876 to 1910 nineteen documented doctors practiced in Yuma, Arizona. Many came to Yuma to practice in the Yuma Territorial Prison or Fort Yuma; others came because the railroad passed through Yuma. However, all of the doctors provided medicine to the citizens of Yuma, Arizona.

A. Other duties

i. Dr. Cotter, arrived in 1884, built first skyscraper

ii. Dr. Hefferman, arrived in 1889, “Father of Imperial Valley”

iii. Dr. Knotts, arrived in 1908, Director of Health for Yuma county

V. Reclamation service surgeon

a. Introductory statement - Dr. Clymer was the first reclamation service surgeon in Yuma, Arizona. As a reclamation service surgeon, he came to Yuma to provide care to those working for the United States Reclamation Service, on the dams and irrigation canals in the Yuma and Imperial Valley area. He also had the first private hospital and was the first doctor to own an automobile. In 1908, Dr. R.R. Knotts arrived as an assitant reclamation service surgeon to Dr. Clymer.

b. Dr. R. R. Knotts

A. He had a “cheery disposition, smile, and good word for everyone, he made many friends and attracted a large and continually growing practice.”

B. First lieutenant, later captain, of the National Guard in Yuma.

C. Served in World War I, in France

i. Upon returning to Yuma, he said, “Yuma looks mighty good to me after my service in the rain and mud of France, I expect to permanently abide where the sun shines all the time.”

D. He served as County Physician and Superintendent of the Indian School, a director of the Rotary Club, president of the Yuma County Medical Association, and historian of the doctors and hospitals in Yuma.

VI. Hospitals in Yuma

a. Introductory Statement - Many of the first doctors did not have a hospital. They worked in their homes or in the front room of a building. The first hospital was an abandoned building across the street from the Catholic Church. “According to early accounts, there was an operation table and some pots and pans.” It was abandoned in 1908. In 1893 the next hospital was built, but was later destroyed in the flood of 1916. The next recorded hospital was the Wilson House.

A. It accommodated twenty patients, and overlooked the prison

B. Mrs. George (Mercedes) Wilson Downey ran the hospital with a contract from the county to treat indigent patients.

a. The Wilson house also cared for the miners in surrounding areas

b. Also, a mortuary, where Mrs. George Downey perfected a preserving the dead with flat irons

C. Mrs. George (Mercedes) Wilson Downey

a. Brief biography

D. Other hospitals: Yuma County Hospital, Yuma General Hospital, and Cochan Sanatorium

a. Founders of each hospital and brief biographies

VII. History of Yuma Regional Medical Center

a. Introductory Statement - Many of these hospitals were closed during the Great Depression. The Yuma General Hospital struggled its way into the 1950s turning into a sanitarium. In the year 1958, Parkview Hospital was founded. In 1961, the hospital was sold and became Parkview Baptist Hospital.

A. Founding and timelines

i. In 1961, fifty more beds were placed in Parkview Baptist

ii. In 1969, an x-ray machine was installed that had a fluoroscopy, which was an imaging technique that used X-rays to obtain real-time moving images of the interior of an object

iii. In 1971, the 15,000th baby was born

b. Doctors and Nurses (each have an interview or biography in YRMC newsletter)

A. Dr. William Phillips, first chief of staff

B. Dr. Henry Meyer, first internal medicine doctor

C. Dr. Karl Morgan, radiologist who used the nuclear scanning device (mentioned in A. b.)

D. Jane Norris, one of the first nurses

c. Volunteers (each have an interview or brief biography in YRMC newsletter)

A. Clara Roberts, one of the first volunteers

B. Johnny Rodriguez, the first male volunteer

C. Marie Van Orden, a native of Puerto Rico, was one of

about 12 Spanish-speaking volunteer interpreters

VIII. Transformation into Yuma Regional Medical Center

A. Introductory Statement - In 1972, Parkview Baptist was once again sold for the third and last time. Its new name is Yuma Regional Medical Center. In 1973, it was given accreditation by the American Hospital Association.

a. Emergency Departments had one full and one part time physician.

i. The nurses worked more freely with the doctors

b. In 1974 the first blood drive was given, and the medical library was opened

c. In 1978, Edite Taylor became the first Neo-Natal Nurse Practioner to work at the hospital

d. In 1979, they raised money for a C.T. Scanner, hosting the first Tractor Rodeo

e. In 1983, they developed an intermediate Emergence Medical Technician Service, and they expanded another 100,000 square feet.

IX. Conclusion

1. Concluding Statement - Beginning in 1849 to the present, there has been a well-documented path of medicine in Yuma. Instead of performing surgeries on two sawhorses and a block of wood in the backyard of a house, the surgeries are performed on state of the art materials in a clinically clean hospital. Instead of many tiny hospitals run by doctors, there is one Medical Center that serves all of Yuma County and outlying areas, with clinics that provide non-interventional care. Medicine has changed in many new and exciting ways, but some things will always be the same: the doctors and nurse provide medicine and care and the community supports. Medicine is and always will be significant to Yuma history and culture. The only thing that changes the significance of medicine is how the community looks at medicine. When one looks at the continuing transformation of medicine in Yuma, it is possible to see how much medicine has grown when the community supports. If the community continues to support medicine, medicine continues to support the community. The community should learn from the history. It is important to never forget that the past makes the present and the present makes the future.