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A Century of American Pharmacy

THE American Pharmaceutical Association is the first organization of pharmacists in America to reach its centennial. Founded in Philadelphia in 1852 by twenty-four practitioners of pharmacy, it now has 16,000 active and 9000 associate members. The immediate reason for its formation was the need for concerted action to improve the quality of drugs required to compound the prescriptions of physicians. In the early days of the Republic, most drugs were imported from foreign sources. No uniformity in standards was observed at the various ports of entry. A shipment of opium or cinchona bark or senna leaves might fail to pass inspection at New York and then be taken to Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Boston and be admitted, because the inspectors at these points were guided by a lower standard.

It was to overcome such laxity in the admission of drugs, and also to promote more formal training for those entering the practice of pharmacy, that the first group of pharmacists met in New York in October 1851. At a second session, in Philadelphia, October 6-8, 1852, they founded a permanent national organization, which has been functioning in behalf of the profession ever since.

One of the first acts of the new association was to adopt a Code of Ethics to govern the professional practice of pharmacy. Agitation by the association for sound laws to prevent adulteration and misbranding of drugs and to create official standards resulted in the eventual passage of pharmacy laws in each state, as well as in the federal government.

Although several colleges of pharmacy were already in operation in 1852 the American Pharmaceutical Association provided the stimulus for the establishment of pharmacy courses in many other private institutions and in state universities. Today there are more than 70 accredited colleges of pharmacy and more than 100,000 registered pharmacists practicing their profession in 50,000 pharmacies and in several thou-

sand hospitals, manufacturing plants, wholesale drug houses, public institutions, and government agencies.

As the association completes 100 years of progress, its objectives, as stated in its constitution, still include improvement in production and distribution of drugs and medicines; fostering and encouraging interprofessional relations in the interests of better health; improving the art and science of pharmacy through its journals, monographs, and *The National Formulary*; supporting programs of education to prepare personnel for the profession; promoting higher standards of licensure and registration for pharmacists, to ensure the availability of competent personnel; and conducting in its own laboratory, and through research grants, investigations and experiments for the improvement of the quality of drugs.

The American Pharmaceutical Association, as an affiliate of the AAAS, endeavors to bring to those who are interested in medicine the type of program that will orient them in a field that fascinates the uninitiated and frequently baffles those charged with the duty of bringing the latest contributions of science to the sick promptly and effectively and at a cost that does not make a cure prohibitive.

On October 7 the American Pharmaceutical Association observed its Founders' Day with a symposium on interprofessional ethics. Following a centennial dinner, the addresses of three speakers were transmitted to 10,000 members in the local and student branches of the association, which were holding simultaneous meetings in more than sixty cities from coast to coast. Underlying the Founders' Day program was the realization that modern science, with its mass production and distribution, is bound to exert a great influence on the social and economic welfare of the American people. This, in turn, will require redefining the lines of demarcation of the various professional functions in the field of medical care, and it may necessitate careful reconsideration of professional codes, especially in their interprofessional aspects.

ROBERT P. FISCHER

*American Pharmaceutical Association
Washington, D. C.*

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