

**The 2022 Visiting Speaker Series in the History of Medicine Program
Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University**



Dr. Mindy Schwartz, MD

**“The Real Dr. Guillotin and Adventures
from the Medicine of History”**

When: Thursday, October 20, 2022

Time: 5:30pm-6:30pm.

Reception to begin at 5:00 pm.
Light refreshments will be served.

Where: DSB 1002 (London) and
MEB 1113 (Windsor)

Dr. Mindy Schwartz was kind enough to sit down for an interview with us:

Five Questions with Dr. Mindy Schwartz:

1. **Can you tell us about the work you will present in your lecture for this year’s Visiting Speaker Series in the History of Medicine at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University?**

My talk is part of a bigger project that I have been working, called CHOMP—the Chicago History of Medicine Project—that is a history of medicine in ‘bite size pieces.’ My work emphasizes the clinical historical connections. I am working on a web resource of individual books, articles, podcasts, and web links as a part of a cohesive syllabus joining medicine and history. The topics focus primarily on the value of history in medical education, the practice of medicine over time, medical education as well as exploring changes in medicine and society. My goal is to put together something that can be a first contact and resource to someone interested in medical history but without any formal background.

2. **Who is Dr. Guillotin? And what other clinical historical connections inspire you?**

Dr. Guillotin is a perfect example of someone whose name is very familiar to all. In truth, he did not invent the instrument and actually was a crusader for social justice. Like many individuals who live in rapidly changing times, he winds up in events that he could have never anticipated and clearly go beyond his control. I think that exploring history teaches us there is always more to the story!

3. **Was there anything that surprised you about this project, or of these connections, once you got deeper into your research? Or rather, made a discovery in your work that made you say “wow!”?**

I have never had a true ‘aha’ moment but I get a great deal of satisfaction making new connections. I love learning something new and the moment when you look at something with new eyes! The Nobel prize winner Alfred Szent Gyorgi once said, “discovery is seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought.” I have learned of numerous examples of connections that link history and clinical medicine daily, such as Iditarod Race, the Graham Cracker and the March of Dimes.

4. **You are not a historian, but a practicing physician. How did you become interested in the history of medicine?**

I always was interested in history as a child. When I was in elementary school, the biggest adventure was to go to Theodore Roosevelt’s home in Sagamore Hill (Oyster Bay, New York). To this day, I have loved fieldtrips or what I call history adventures. In college, I took a few history courses, but it was just one of several interests. About 20 years ago, when I was the attending physician on the hospital’s inpatient general medicine service, I saw a case of Ludwig’s Angina (a rare, serious bacterial skin infection of the floor of the mouth that had been described by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm von Ludwig in 1836). Only occasionally do we see ENT cases and I wanted to teach my team more about this condition. This particular patient piqued my interest and thus began my greater exploration into medical history.

5. **Do you think the history of medicine is important for medical students today? How might knowing the history of your profession impact a practicing physician?**

I think that the expertise of historians can add immeasurably to the skills of physicians, especially practicing clinicians. The ability to do a good history—I mean a really good history—with detailed social history—is a lost art. Too often the patient as a person is lost to the mountains of data we generate in clinical practice. Through historical investigation, doctors learn how to be super sleuths. In order to complete graduate work in history, they are required to know the published literature at the highest level. They access primary sources, archival resources and are expected to be experts in their historical subject areas. I continue to learn and grow from my exposure to historians’ methods and their craft. This I believe has made me a better doctor.

Thank you very much for your time Dr Schwartz. We look forward to your presentation on October 20—all are welcome to attend!