

## THE JEGHERS INDEX: A UNIQUE MEDICAL RESOURCE

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The Jeghers Medical Index System is a unique library of articles selected from quality medical journals and organized into a file system which demonstrates the interrelatedness and complexity of the medical literature. This valuable resource was created by Dr. Harold Jeghers in the early 1930's and diligently maintained by him throughout his long and successful career of over five decades.

Upon graduating from Western Reserve University School of Medicine, young Harold Jeghers was encouraged to do as much journal reading as possible to prepare for the written and oral exams required by eastern residency programs. Discovering great satisfaction and enjoyment, he continued this reading program even after his acceptance at Boston City Hospital. Thus began a lifelong advocacy of self-education through the systematic reading of quality medical journals.

As he progressed through his residency at Boston City Hospital, teaching commitments prompted the creation of a personal file of those articles gleaned from his regular journal reading. Articles were removed from their journals and filed by subject to facilitate easy retrieval. The file grew rapidly and became an extremely useful teaching aid for ward rounds, conferences, and Grand Rounds. Due to these successful teaching endeavors, Dr. Jeghers was appointed Assistant Professor of Medicine at Boston University, the first such appointment for the Department of Medicine at Boston City Hospital.

Boston City Hospital, affiliated with Tufts and Harvard as well as Boston University, provided a stimulating research environment. An avid interest in medical research, initiated during Medical School at Western Reserve University, was to thrive in Boston and have a lasting effect on the direction of Dr. Jeghers' career, resulting in the further development of his personal file.

In 1946, due to unparalleled success in the training of exemplary house officers and medical students in the Boston University Medical Service, Dr. Jeghers was appointed Professor and Director of the Department of Medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine. The file, initially kept at home, was finally moved to the workplace, where it remained throughout the rest of his career. The rich research environment of Georgetown University, heightened by the newly established National Institutes of Health, stimulated the expansion of the Jeghers file from eight four-drawer cabinets to twenty-two by 1956.

Attracting national attention with his innovative ideas in medical education, Dr. Jeghers spent an equally successful ten years as Director of the Department of Medicine at Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey. In 1966, Dr. Jeghers was appointed Medical Director of St. Vincent's Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts where he spent the remainder of his career. During both of these moves his personal file, now known as the Medical Index, accompanied him. By the time of his retirement in the late 1970's, his file had increased to ninety-nine four-drawer cabinets.

In 1980, Dr. Jeghers relinquished control and transferred his file to its present location at St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center in Youngstown, Ohio. Here, under the guidance of its benefactor, Leonard Caccamo, M.D., and the Director of Medical Education, Robert Kennedy, Ph.D., it continued to grow and develop to a present total of 134 file cabinets.

Today, the Jeghers Index maintains a dynamic collection of over one million articles, gleaned from seventy-five quality-assessed medical journals and organized into thirty thousand different vertical files. This labor-intensive operation utilizes librarians, medical and computer science students, physicians, and a clerical staff to maintain and update this impressive medical education resource.

Beginning in 1983, heroic attempts were made to computerize the Jeghers Index. After several years of experimentation, about two-thirds of the complex Jeghers system is now "on-line." Although off-site access to the Jeghers Index will be an eventual reality, so far the computer project has been reserved for in-house operation and maintenance.

In addition to file maintenance and the computerization project, there is a strong educational component to the Jeghers Index. Historically, Dr. Jeghers recruited residents, who rotated through the library assisting with its operation. Today, first-year internal medicine residents complete a four week rotation through the Jeghers Index, learning the search techniques of the traditional library, as well as the unique heuristic browsing capabilities of the Jeghers Index. Residents apply these newly acquired skills to management of specific patients and to preparation of a research paper, the culmination of their time spent in the Jeghers Index.

The Jeghers Index also sponsors a Clinical Librarian Program, where a reference librarian attends bedside rounds and morning report with residents, providing up-to-date relevant information concerning those problems directly involved in patient care.

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In-house use of the Jeghers Index has steadily increased over the years; however, the occasional use by physicians and librarians outside of the hospital has been particularly rewarding. In such cases, traditional electronic database searching has been unproductive, requiring the uncontrolled vocabulary of the Jeghers Index.

The Jeghers Index is a dynamic, interactive medical database. It represents the largest and most comprehensive vertical file of medical literature in existence today, an outstanding tribute to the dedication and excellence of Dr. Harold Jeghers.