Research Guides

Medicine in California

By

Elena Smith, California History Section Librarian
Carmen Nehmer, Library Intern
Giancarlo Gilbert-Iglesrud, Library Intern
Did you or your child get a vaccine this year? Have you ever held the hand of a loved one who is in the hospital for a procedure? Are you or is one of your family members a medical professional? If so, the history of California medicine has probably affected you. Explore the proud history of California’s doctors, nurses, epidemiologists, surgeons, hospitals, health officers and more via the California History Section’s rich collections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digitized Resources</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference Works:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamphlets and Papers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Collections</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog General Research Tips</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-Specific Resources in our Catalog</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County-Specific Resources in our Catalog</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site Research Resources</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other On-site Resources</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Places to Look</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH.
Digitized Resources

Can’t come to the library just yet? No worries. There are a number of online resources you can explore related to medicine in California.

Digitized Publications

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California’s medical history. You can see them on Internet Archive.

URL: https://archive.org/

Type in Search Box: ((doctor*) OR (medic*)) AND collection:(californiastatelibrary)&sin=TXT

Select Option: “Search full text of books”

Digitized Images

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our image collection. Check them out and remember that we have a lot more in the library.

URL: https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/

Type in Search Box: (Medic* OR Quacks OR Pharmac* OR Physicians OR Surg* OR Hospitals OR Sanitariums OR Doctors)
Unsure about where to start? Consult a book. If you are interested in the history of California’s hospitals, health boards, medical education or epidemics, these books will get you going.

Lyman, Donald O. Public Health in California. S.l: Donald O. Lyman], 2012.

Focusing primarily on the period between 1970 and 2011 but with chronologies, director profiles and appendices covering earlier periods, this history of California’s Department of Public Health highlights many of the state-wide health challenges that the Department of Public Health has faced over the decades.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990014579290205115


This is a multivolume collection of California Department of Public Health oral history interviews. Conducted by Lyman, these interviews cover the 1950s through the 2000s and include several department directors, policymakers and other health officers.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990014578620205115

While tracing the history of one major county hospital this book chronicles California epidemics, medical treatment methods and changes in hospital finance and patient payment structures that have occurred over the past 150 years.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990010825550205115

Looking Back--a Century of Nursing. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Medical School of Nursing, 2000.

This thoroughly researched and illustrated book summarizes some of the many changes in nursing and, more to the point, how nurses were educated by tracking the LA County Medical Center School of Nursing over a 100-year period.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990014647050205115


This study focuses on how public health concerns over disease can be misused to discriminate against populations by looking at Chinese, Japanese and Mexican American experiences in Los Angeles over a 60-year period.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990012636140205115
Books

A collection of papers, newspaper article transcriptions and letters, this work chronicles the progress and later suppression of one of California’s early health challenges, cholera.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL Search: 990011506420205115

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Southern California’s climate had a reputation as being helpful to tuberculosis patients. This book tracks changing approaches to TB, from a climactic affliction and contagious (and deadly) disease to a treatable infection.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL Search: 990014006200205115

Written by the man who started the AID’s quilt, this autobiography provides a personal perspective on the AID’s epidemic of the 1980’s including its effects in San Francisco, the lack of knowledge about it, the stigma surrounding the disease and the ways he and others sought to combat it.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL Search: 990010923560205115

This journal contains detailed medical findings from the inquests Spencer conducted in El Dorado County during the 1880s. It also breaks down the costs associated with county inquests and burials.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

**Search:** 990009533130205115

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**Catalog of Drugs, Patent Medicines and Sundries at Cut Prices.** Los Angeles: Sun Drug Co., 1908.

Are you interested in patent medicines? Check out the “miracle cures” sold in 1908. Promising to treat everything from rheumatism to piles, this catalog offers an extensive list of the different remedies marketed at the turn of the last century.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

**Search:** 990005427390205115

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Selling beds, sterilization equipment, surgical plates, straightjackets and more, this wonderfully illustrated catalog provides a glimpse of medical practices and equipment in the 1920s.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

**Search:** 990004245920205115
Neither books nor medical journals these pamphlets and papers nevertheless provide real-time snapshots of California medicine.

**Medical Pamphlets.** Sacramento, Calif: California State Library.

This multi-volume set of pamphlets on medical practices covers certification exam questions, epidemic disease treatments, smallpox vaccinations, rabies case studies and more between the 1860’s and 1930’s.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990010108440205115


Covering 1870-1901, these papers created by and for medical professionals include case studies on medical issues ranging from broken bones to liver disease. It also covers animal experimentation.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990010142080205115

**Proceedings and Papers... Annual Conference of the California Mosquito Control Association.** California: s.n. 1942-1983.

This massive set of conference papers documents the serious challenge of controlling vector-borne diseases by controlling their carriers, including reports on the relative success of various mosquito abatement measures complete with statistics.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990001350300205115
PERIODICALS

Don’t want to read an entire book? Check these publications for real-time information on medical practices and healthcare innovations.

Pacific Medical Journal
Covering 1884-1917, this title contains articles by professional doctors describing cases, illnesses and new practices. It also provides an editorial section, news, and legal information as it pertains to the medical profession.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990001472300205115 OR 99000147270205115

California Medicine
Covering 1924-2002, this journal provides detailed medical information on specific diseases and medical practices. It also contains case reports on specific cases.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990001498300205115 OR 990001498300205115 OR 990001498290205115

California Nurse
Covering 1961-2005 this periodical covers anything related to nursing, from legal information to changes in the field and more. In addition, it provides information and updates on the workings of the Association.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990001457460205115 OR 990001457460205115
Manuscript Collections

In addition to books and periodicals, there are many archival resources that focus on California’s doctors and medical providers. Here are some relevant collections at the State Library.

Herbert Carleton Sawyer Correspondence
Herbert Carleton Sawyer was an acting assistant surgeon in the San Francisco Bay Area. He could be requested for town visits if needed. The addresses on his letters written indicate that Sawyer's practice ranged from Alcatraz to Kelseyville.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990010040650205115

Robert Edgar Sanderson World War II Letters
Robert Edgar Sanderson was a Stockton resident drafted during World War II. The collection is comprised of his correspondence during his deployment in New Guinea and the Philippines. Some of those letters address medical practices like malaria outbreak control in New Guinea.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990014998050205115

Agnews Asylum collection, 1859-1978
Consisting primarily of commitment orders ranging from 1859-1897, this collection provides a clear picture of the individuals this institution treated, and why they were admitted for psychiatric care.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990014432670205115
Not finding what you need online? We have additional materials available that cannot be accessed digitally. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on medicine.

**Catalog**

If you are looking for images, books and articles on medicine, your best source is our catalog.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?
vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

**Type in Search Box:** (Medic* OR Quacks OR Pharmac* OR Physicians OR Surg* OR Hospitals OR Sanitariums OR Doctors)

**Limit:** By desired material type

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**California Information File II**

Sometimes the catalog doesn’t provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find information about individual hospitals, related articles and more.

**URL:** http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

**Type in Subject Box:** (Medic* OR Quacks OR Pharmac* OR Physicians OR Surg* OR Hospitals OR Sanitariums OR Doctors)

**For a narrower search:** Add a place to your keyword search
California’s healthcare practices have had far-ranging effects on everything from politics to shipping. Explore some of our resources via these catalog links.

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<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Vitals</td>
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<td>Images</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscripts</td>
<td>Chinese Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals</td>
<td>German Americans</td>
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<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Irish Americans</td>
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Curious about the history of medical care in a specific county? While these catalog links don’t list all of what the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.

Alameda
Amador
Butte
Colusa
Contra Costa

Del Norte
El Dorado
Fresno
Glenn
Humboldt

Imperial
Inyo
Kern
Kings
Lake
Los Angeles
Marin
Mariposa
Mendocino
Mono
Monterey
Napa
Nevada
Orange
Placer

Plumas
Riverside
Sacramento
San Bernardino
San Diego
San Francisco
San Joaquin
San Luis Obispo
San Mateo
Santa Barbara
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Shasta
Sierra
Siskiyou
Solano
Sonoma

Stanislaus
Sutter
Tehama
Tuolumne
Ventura
Yolo
Yuba
Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points. If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.

**California Information File**

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else. This file indexes over 130 years of articles, books, and manuscript collections on California medical practices and more.

**Subject Headings:**
1. Individual medical practitioners by name
2. Medicine (Various subdivisions)
3. Hospitals (Various subdivisions)
4. Insurance: Health
5. Pharmacy

**Picture File**

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file.

**Subject Headings:**
1. Individual medical practitioners by name
2. (Various Counties and cities): Buildings
Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about the information on hospitals and medicine in the following files:

**Vertical Files**

Our massive collection of vertical files cover a wide variety of topics including medicine. You can check them for information on hospitals and medical organizations.

**Subject Headings:**
- Subject: Medicine
- Subject: Hospitals

**Postcard Files**

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of medical building images. Most are not online.

**Subject Headings:**
- (Various counties and cities): Buildings

**Map Files**

Our map files contain a number of maps related to California including maps that have the locations of medical facilities like hospitals. Most are not online but are catalogued in our card file.

**Subject Headings:**
- Check with librarians
Other Places to Look

Can’t find what you need in our collection? You may want to check out the following organizations.

Other California State Library Sections

Government Publications Section
Witkin Law Library
Sutro Library
General Information

- http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/law/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/services/

Government Agencies

California State Archives
California State Parks
Department of Health Care Services
Medical Board of California
California Emergency Medical Services Authority
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Health and Human Services Agency
California Health Benefit Exchange

- https://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/
- https://www.parks.ca.gov/
- https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx
- https://emsa.ca.gov/
- https://oehha.ca.gov/
- https://www.chhs.ca.gov/
- https://www.hbex.ca.gov/
Government Agencies Cont.

California Office of Health Information Integrity
California Department of Managed Health Care
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
California Department of Public Health
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine
California Department of State Hospitals
Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development
Local libraries and archives

- https://www.chhs.ca.gov/ohii/
- http://www.dmhc.ca.gov/
- https://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/
- https://www.cdph.ca.gov/
- https://www.cirm.ca.gov/
- https://dsh.ca.gov/
- https://oshpd.ca.gov/

Non-Profits and Stake-holders

Salvatori California Pharmacy Museum
Museum of Medical History
Gold Country Medical History Museum
American Association for the History of Medicine
Southern California Medical Museum
California Medical Association

- https://donjunesalvatoricapharmacymuseum.org/
- http://www.goldcountrymedicalmuseum.com/
- http://www.histmed.org/
- http://socalmedicalmuseum.org/
- https://www.cmadocs.org/
This guide is also available online at:
http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/