

Five and Counting

Hilary S Morris

The recent BSHM congress held in Leeds was a spectacular success in promoting the history of medicine. Over the three days, delegates had access to a rich and varied programme of papers all of which were the product of carefully researched areas of professional interest and were equally well received by an enthusiastic audience. While this level of academic rigor has long been a hallmark of BSHM events, it is important to note that in addition to many familiar and loyal members, there was an unprecedented number of new faces, particularly in relation to international and student delegates.

Developments such as this are hugely significant as they are indisputable indicators that the BSHM has a secure role in promoting the history of medicine due to its willingness to adapt and find a relevance amongst new audiences. Consequently, our presence on social media and the inclusion of hybrid meetings have facilitated a new type of engagement, while our continuing blogs, book reviews and regular newsletters are a well-received way of promoting the history of medicine amongst affiliate societies, interest groups and representatives from a range of diverse subject disciplines.

Added to this successful list of activities is our own journal *Topics in the History of Medicine (THoM)*. In 2020, BSHM President Mike Collins led discussions regarding a proposal of finding ways to collate and promote congress papers in a more permanent format. While the preferred choice of delivery was a publication, there were initial concerns regarding the implementation of a task of this size, especially in relation to the need for appropriate editorial expertise.

Furthermore, questions were quite rightly asked regarding the feasibility of launching a new journal at a time when many similar and well-established publications were struggling to continue, due in part to the way that publishers were responding to unprecedented challenges in the digital age. However, while noting such concerns, there was consensus amongst society officers that the subject knowledge continually created within the activities of the BSHM was too important for it not to be presented in a permanent format.

Plans therefore went ahead to launch the society's own peer reviewed, open access, online only publication. The first volume of *THoM* comprised papers on the 'History of Medicine at Sea' based on presentations at the 2019 congress in Bristol. Volume 2 drew on themes presented at the 2021 congress in Sheffield. As the journal was intended to be an annual publication, it was agreed that there should be an additional single-themed issue for intervening non-congress years. Accordingly, the next edition featured the 'History of Military Medicine', the theme of the 2022 Poynter lecture and meeting.

This focus on a single topic has proved to be an extremely popular feature of the journal as it encourages an additional range of research opportunities in response to the chosen theme. Hence, I would like to thank Bryan Rhodes for suggesting ‘Quirks, Quacks and Cul-de-sacs’ for volume 5, which not only reflects his own eclectic and enthusiastic commitment to the history of medicine but also has led to the most fascinating collection of papers that show just how complex the concept of progress may be in relation to responding to the nature of health and disease.

Topics in the History of Medicine continues to be guided by an Editorial Board, with the assistance of Edward Wawrzynczak as Journal Editor. One of the significant differences from other publications is the additional role of the Guest Editor who is responsible for a particular volume. The decision to offer this as a fixed term of office has proved to be very popular as it provides an opportunity for those with an interest in the history of medicine to become involved in all aspects of the editorial process. It also ensures that the journal continues to reflect the diverse background of BSHM members and their own particular professional and academic histories.

The breadth and complexity of the history of medicine should never be underestimated, and over the past five volumes *THoM* has evolved in ways which reflect this at every opportunity. The journal is increasingly encouraging interdisciplinary research, and this has resulted in peer-reviewed papers which are truly innovative in content, analysis and interpretation. It is also this special vision which continues to attract submissions from not only established authors but also students who are appreciating the opportunity of publishing in a journal of this type. In turn, *THoM* is also attracting an increasingly broad readership both within the UK and internationally.

The continued success of the journal would not be possible without the unstinting support of those who tirelessly ensure every aspect of the journal meets the highest standard, and their efforts are both acknowledged and warmly appreciated. The completion of this volume also takes the number of published papers to fifty. While it is a brave, or foolish, person who claims to forecast the future, I nevertheless join the many who have contacted me to say just how much this journal has been a highly successful addition to the way in which the BSHM promotes the history of medicine.

I would like to end by referencing Will Parker’s excellent editorial for Volume 2 with the highly appropriate title ‘Producing the “Difficult Second Album”’. Having now read this volume as well as already being involved in discussions with Guest Editor Peter Carpenter and Journal Editor Edward Wawrzynczak for Volume 6, I am firmly of the opinion that *THoM* will not be even a two-album wonder but has every chance of becoming a classic collection with a full catalogue of greatest hits.

Keywords

BSHM, Congress, Journal, History, Medicine, International

Biographical details

Hilary Morris is Editor-in-Chief of *THoM* and President of the BSHM.

Morris HS. Five and Counting. *Topics in the History of Medicine*. 2025; 5: 1-3.

Topics in the History of Medicine is an Open Access publication of the British Society for the History of Medicine made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence which allows unrestricted redistribution in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes provided the original work is properly credited. <https://bshh.org.uk>

© *The Author(s)*, 2025.