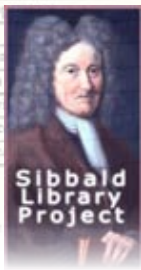


James Lind Library News

January 2010



The James Lind Library website has been created to help people understand fair tests of treatments in health care.

JLL and WHO

Earlier this year, we were heartened by an article about the James Lind Library by Kathryn Senior, published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation (doi:10.2471/BLT.09.030609).

The article introduces the Library as a "unique, multilingual resource on testing health-care treatments", and quotes Najeeb Al-Shorbaji, director of the department of Knowledge Management and Sharing at WHO, as saying that it "brings evidence to the masses in languages and formats



that people understand". Najeeb added "We have taken formal steps to designate the James Lind Library as a WHO Collaborating Centre. We hope through this collaboration we will be able to work with more countries to translate the essays into more languages as part of our multilingualism programme."

"the JLL brings evidence to the masses in languages and formats that people understand"

Najeeb Al-Shorbaji
WHO



Correcting the record

There continues to be a widespread misapprehension that the Parisian physician Pierre-Charles-Alexandre Louis (1787-1872) introduced numerical methods ('la méthode numérique') to assess the effects of medical treatments in the 1830s. In fact, as made clear by records added to the James Lind Archive by our expert on the 18th Century, Professor



Ulrich Tröhler, numerical approaches were introduced to describe diseases and to evaluate therapy a century earlier, chiefly, but not exclusively, in Britain. JLL records illustrate both an appreciation of the importance of numerical methods, as well as their application in documenting diseases and assessing medical interventions.

These include prospective studies in addition to that reported by James Lind in 1753, for example, William Watson's 1768 account of a series of experiments "instituted with a view of ascertaining the most successful method of inoculating the smallpox".

JLL development

The James Lind Library has achieved a great deal since its launch in 2003, on the 250th anniversary of the publication of James Lind's Treatise of the Scurvy. That year we received a Scientific American SciTech web award, one of only five for medical websites, and the only one of these websites to have been created outside the United States. Since then, the James Lind Library has grown remarkably, which belies the fact that it has been developed and maintained without any formal funding. Most of the original material on the site comes from the Sibald Library at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Scotland, and work on these documents and other information in the Library is done by unpaid volunteers

www.jameslindlibrary.org

Testing treatments

The most popular materials in the James Lind Library are its explanatory essays and the 100-page book 'Testing Treatments'. The text of the latter is now available (free) in English, Arabic, Spanish and Chinese, and the English text has been downloaded more than 120,000 times. The James Lind Library and 'Testing Treatments' are clearly helping to satisfy a need for high quality, easy-to-understand material explaining the features of fair tests of treatments. This is confirmed by the many reports we receive from teachers who are finding the material in the Library helpful. We are delighted and grateful that the English National Institute for Health Research and the UK Medical Research Council have recognised this success, and have agreed to provide Iain Chalmers with some funding to promote further development of the James Lind Library.

Planning for a 'Testing Treatments 2' and James Lind Library 2.0 has begun. The text of the second edition of 'Testing Treatments' will replace the current JLL explanatory essays. It will remain possible to print out the whole book (as now), but also to select individual chapters. We already have lots of ideas about how the James Lind Library can be developed – for example, by adding more video and audio material (some in the form of podcasts), slide presentations, self-test exercises, and links to 'sibling' websites developed to help improve general knowledge about fair tests of treatments.



This is a great time for our readers and visitors to let us know what features they would like us to include in JLL 2.0, so please write to us with suggestions at

**feedback@
jameslindlibrary.org.**

Lind's new portrait

Readers of this newsletter may remember our feature in the last issue of JLL News about the rediscovery of Sir George Chalmers' painting of James Lind. The striking Lind painting featured here was commissioned in 2008 by a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh - Guy's Hospital geneticist, Dr Simon Holden. The work is by Cambridge artist Rebecca Merry, who works primarily in egg tempera and other traditional media to create contemporary figurative paintings inspired by images and ideas from the east and west. www.rebeccamerry.co.uk

Doctoral theses

The doctoral theses dealing with aspects of the history of clinical trials have been downloaded thousands of times since they were added to the James Lind Library last year. This level of interest surprised their authors as well as us. You can currently download PDFs of any of the following:

Bull JP (1951). A study of the history and principles of clinical therapeutic trials. MD Thesis, University of Cambridge.

Tröhler U (1978). Quantification in British medicine and Surgery 1750-1830, with special reference to its introduction into therapeutics. PhD thesis, University of London.

Marks HM (1987). Ideas as reforms. Therapeutic experiments and medical practice, 1900-1980. PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Cox-Maximov D (1997). The making of the clinical trial in Britain, 1910-1945: expertise, the state and the public. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

Toth B (1998). Clinical trials in British medicine 1848-1948, with special reference to the development of the randomised controlled trial. PhD thesis, University of Bristol.

Williams KJ (2005). British pharmaceutical industry, synthetic drug manufacture and the clinical testing of novel drugs 1895-1939. PhD thesis, University of Manchester