

## NYCPM Celebrates 100 Years

Here's a look back at how the college was created.

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The New York College of Podiatric Medicine (NYCPM) will be celebrating its centennial anniversary on May 18, 2011. Among the many things being done to mark this momentous occasion are a gala party that will be held -- on almost the exact anniversary of the day that the College opened -- at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Manhattan, and the publication of a book that recounts the century of events and people that went into making this great institution.



The School of Chiropody of NY

### The College's History

NYCPM proclaims that it is "America's First and Largest Free-standing College of Podiatric Medicine." This is not mere hyperbole. The College (Figure 1) opened its doors for students on Monday evening, May 22, 1911 at 8 o'clock. Up to that time, the profession, if one can call it that, of chiropody was more a vocation than a professional endeavor. However, over the next few decades, Alfred Joseph, Dr. Maurice J. Lewi (Figure 2),

along with the efforts of many others, transformed chiropody into a respectable medical specialty.



MAURICE J. LEWI, M.D.  
*President*

During the century that transpired, from 1911 to 2011, there has been an amazing transformation, (Figures 3 and 4) not just in the field of podiatry, but also in the United States and the world. The current president of NYCPM, Louis L. Levine, and the chairman of the Board of Trustees, Stanley S. Mandel, believed that it was important to chronicle who was involved, how, when, and where these changes took place, and I was selected to be the chronicler.



The Bako Pathology Anatomy Lab

Researching and writing the one-hundred-year history of The New York College of Podiatric Medicine presented a daunting, interesting, and exciting challenge. In order to have a complete picture of the growth of the College, it seemed necessary to place it within the context of the historical events of the 20th century in which the United States was involved, as well as the emergence of the profession of podiatry, and the changes that have taken place in New York State and New York City.

When the College opened on May 22, 1911, the world was changing dramatically. It might be fair to say that the past one hundred years have been filled with a plethora of events that cannot be rivaled by any of the centuries that preceded it. We went from the mass production of automobiles to putting a man on the moon. We fought in two world wars and participated in at least another half dozen military engagements, including our recent withdrawal from Iraq and involvement in Afghanistan.

In politics, we had two Roosevelts who served as president, a Catholic elected to that office who was assassinated, an actor who won that office, and an election in which an African-American man and two women were running for the highest offices in the land. We even had one president who resigned in disgrace after a scandal during his administration. A father and son (not

the first) served as president, and another was subjected to an impeachment proceeding because of lying about inappropriate sexual activities (also, not the first), and for the first time in our history, we had a presidential election decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Advances in science and technology exploded during this century. We went from sending messages by telegraph over wires placed on poles to our ability to speak and text over wireless networks that straddle the globe. While x-rays are still being used in medicine, also available to podiatrists are PET, CAT, and MRI scans. Surgical techniques have advanced from the use of instruments at the beginning of the century that had not changed much over a few hundred years to the current ability to use laser techniques and robotics. Treatment or vaccines for diseases like measles, mumps, polio, yellow fever, and tuberculosis have been discovered or invented.

#### The Modern History of Podiatry

The modern history of podiatry begins at the tail end of the 19th century, and runs parallel to the amazing events of the 20th century. The profession did not just explode into being. There were men and women whose names are not recognizable, but whose foresight and competence led them to offer therapy for foot ills. These were people who, at best, had the advantage of some apprenticeship to a more experienced "practitioner." More often, they had simply acquired scalpels and set up business.

Many of them had started as barbers or as manicurists. Frequently, their chiropody practices were associated with the public baths, which were popular, because there was no indoor water until 1900. These men and women were providing a service that no one else was offering and at a price people could afford.

#### The Pioneers of the Profession

Some of these men and women practicing chiropody were keenly aware of the need for greater knowledge and for some legal control over those who held themselves out to be chiropodists. They did not consider it adequate simply to be an apprentice to someone, anyone, who had been treating patients, and, perhaps, did not have any training. They were not satisfied with the "schools" that sprang up here and there. These were commercial establishments with no governmental regulation of the educational programs and with no controlled criteria for competence to receive a certificate of completion for the course.

Perhaps the most important initiative came from Charles S. Levy. His son, Alfred C. Levy, said that he "...was the man who

first considered the idea of a law to regulate the practice of chiropody."

#### The Creation of the Pedic Society

Alfred Joseph with H. Howard Levy, Louis B. Rosenberg, and George Erff, applied to the New York State Legislature for a law regulating chiropody. New York Senate Bill 195 was passed on June 3, 1895, creating the Pedic Society and empowering it to examine candidates for certificates to practice chiropody. Certificates, under this law, were also given to those who could show evidence of having practiced for three years or more in New York State. All others were required to take a written examination. This was the first legal recognition given to chiropody.

Once the law was passed, they decided to form an organization. The practitioners in New York were the first to form a professional organization in 1895, the only one founded by any group in any profession in the 19th century. This is now the New York State Podiatric Medical Association. The Pedic Society continued to have the power to examine and to issue certificates until 1912, when these functions were entrusted to the State Board of Medical Examiners.

Alfred Joseph, whom Dr. Lewi described as "...the best known chiropodist in the world..." at that time, had been a printer before he became a chiropodist. It was not surprising, then, that he conceived of the idea that the Pedic Society should issue a publication. The name given to it was *The Pedic Items* and Joseph was the editor.<sup>30</sup>

He was a prolific writer, and wrote much of the material that appeared in the publication. He wrote well, and sometimes with a touch of humor.

#### National Association of Chiropodists

Alfred Joseph realized the need for an organization on a national level. He was in the forefront of forming the National Association of Chiropodists (NAC), which today is the American Podiatric Medical Association. For the first decade of its existence, the New York Pedic Society stood alone, but in 1906, New Jersey and Massachusetts formed professional organizations, and soon after, spurred by Alfred Joseph's enthusiasm, communicated through the columns of *The Pedic Items*; Illinois, Pennsylvania and Connecticut followed suit. It was time to think about a national organization, and it was at the first anniversary of the Chiropody Society of Pennsylvania that the suggestion was made.

#### The Birth of the College

It is within this milieu that the New York College of Podiatric Medicine was born. A corporation was formed in 1911, under whose supervision, the School of Chiropody was established. The School was located at 1245 Lexington Avenue, New York City, near 84th Street. Life was less numerical then. There was no zip+4 code and the telephone number was simply 7322 Lenox with no area code. The School of Chiropody opened its doors for students on Monday evening, May 22, 1911 at 8 o'clock.

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George Erff, a chiropodist and manager of a bathhouse, was the president, Carlton L. Griffin was the vice president, and Alfred Joseph was the secretary-treasurer of this new enterprise. At this new institution, Erff was to conduct the practical instruction, and Joseph was to conduct the theoretical. Enrollment began in May.

In this endeavor, they called on Dr. Maurice Lewi, then secretary of the State Board of Medical Examiners, in reference to the legislation the chiropodists in the Pedic Society were seeking. They had been referred by an orthopedic surgeon (named Foote!), who was familiar with Dr. Lewi's legislative skills. Dr. Lewi agreed to meet with Erff's group. When they got together, a few nights later, at Dr. Lewi's home, the chiropodists told him of the School of Chiropody, which they had recently organized to improve education in their field. The board of trustees was composed largely of influential politicians, and profit was an objective of the venture. The legislation that they were seeking would authorize the institution to issue diplomas. However, these diplomas would be issued only to students who had completed a required course of study. This aim represented an early implementation of a learned standard of practice and theory; it also was an almost unconscious need to regulate the infant institution and thus, the field of podiatry. Following a few minutes of private consultation, the chiropodists agreed to leave the matter entirely in Dr. Lewi's hands. They drank a toast to the success of their program, after which the group departed, and Dr. Lewi drafted the appropriate legislation that same evening.

#### The Bill Passes.

It was during this same year that Theodore Roosevelt ran for president. U.S efforts to achieve universal healthcare coverage began with the candidacy of T.R., who had the support of progressive healthcare reformers in the 1912 election, but he was defeated (and so was the possibility of universal healthcare).

The bill for chiropody was an amendment to the Public Health Law of the State of New York, dated September 1, 1912,

and required one year of high school for entrance to the school. The Board of Regents had established this standard. The degree upon graduation was Master of Chiropody (M.Cp.).

#### Dr. Lewi Becomes President

The chiropodists asked Dr. Lewi to select a medical doctor to serve as president, but, not surprisingly, no one of stature was willing to undertake the job. The group then called on him and asked, "If we agree upon a physician as an executive, will you help us secure his services?" He readily promised that he would. The next day Mr. Erff telephoned for an appointment and upon arriving, announced that "you are the man." Dr. Lewi responded that "although I would love to be your Moses," the answer was "no," because of his official commitments.

However, after he consulted his mentor, Dr. Abraham Jacobi, and a number of other prominent New York City physicians, all of whom agreed to help by lecturing to the students, he notified Mr. Erff of his decision to accept. Dr. Lewi resigned as secretary of the State Board of Medical Examiners on October 30, 1912, to be effective as of January 1, 1913. The mission and the man were joined. Dr. Maurice J. Lewi was their choice.

The College was the first teaching institution of scientific podiatric medicine (then known as chiropody) in the entire world. The growth of the College and the transformation of the profession of podiatry took place over the next 100 years. In the book, we have created to celebrate NYCPM's Centennial, the entire story is presented. You can order tickets to the Centennial gala by contacting Dr. Stanley Kornhauser, Vice President, Institutional Advancement, at (212) 410-8498, or [skornhauser@nycpm.edu](mailto:skornhauser@nycpm.edu) You can also order one or more copies of the book through Dr. Kornhauser.

