

History of MCO Seal

Dr. Keith:

After reading your introductory remarks at the Sept. 29, 2015, meeting of the Faculty Senate, where you discussed development of the faculty gift to Dr. Gaber and the difficulty in obtaining information about the seal of Medical College of Ohio, I write to bring to your attention a wonderful source of information about MCO.

I'm one of four editors of the 36-chapter, 372-page book, "A Community of Scholars: Reflections of the Early Years of the Medical College of Ohio," published by the UT Press in 2011. It is a history of MCO as seen through the personal remembrances and reflections of faculty members who joined the fledgling institution, which was founded 1964 as the Toledo State College of Medicine, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The book also includes a comprehensive description of the civic and political spadework by local and state civic, medical and political leaders that resulted in establishment of Toledo State College of Medicine as the state's fourth medical school and 100th in the country and lists of the MCO honorary degree recipients and members of the board of trustees.

The book earned reviews in the July 3, 2011, edition of *The Blade* (Toledo); the Autumn 2011 issue of *Toledo Medicine*, a publication of the Academy of Medicine of Toledo and Lucas County; the Oct. 3, 2012, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA); and the Fall 2012 issue of the *Northwest Ohio History*, a publication of the Maumee Valley Historical Society, a piece written by Barb Floyd.

Information about the seal appears on page 47 of the book.

"Approved by the Medical College of Ohio Board of Trustees, the seal was created by Toledo designer Paul Sullivan.

"In its official full-color rendition, the stem, leaves and borders were green; the left quarter-sphere was gold, the right quarter was red; and the serpent and letters were rendered in black.

"Over a two-year period, the Academic Heraldry Committee, consisting of Dr. Glidden Brooks, Dr. Robert Page, Dr. Liberato J.A. DiDio, Mr. William Bender, and Mr. Ronald Watterson of the medical college, and Mr. Otto Wittman and Mr. Charles Guenter of the Toledo Museum of Art, screened 100 sketches, drawings and design from various artists and designers before narrowing the selection down to a handful of possibles.

"Further screening of various renditions of the symbols—round, squat, oval, leaves pointed, leaves rounded, different color combinations—resulted in the emblem finally adopted by the trustees.

"Its center was a modernized version of the staff of Aesculapius entwined by the single serpent. This was a true symbol of medicine. Strides by the committee revealed the "double serpent and wings"—caduceus, which was often used as a symbol of medicine—is, in fact, a distortion of the original. The word "caduceus" comes from the Greek word meaning a "herald's wand" or "staff." The symbol itself is a very old one. It is used in India in ancient times and has also been traced to early Mesopotamia.

"In ancient Greece, the caduceus was the wand of Mercury, messenger of the Gods and god of dream, magic and trade. Throughout the centuries it appeared on printers' signs, on merchant ships and as an emblem of secret societies. It was finally chosen as a medical symbol in England at the time of King Henry VIII in the sixteenth century.

“The serpent in ancient times meant wisdom, health and long life. It was considered to be the most important symbol against disease because the serpent seems to renew itself each time it grows a new skin and sheds its old one. The staff of Aesculapius, ancient Greek and Roman God of healing, is symbolized by a staff entwined by a single serpent because Aesculapius was said to have been followed by a serpent as he went about performing cures.

“The staff of Aesculapius, transposed on the sign of the United Nations, is the symbol of the World Health Organization.

“With regard to colors, dark green is the color of medicine in academic circles, red is for blood, and gold is for urine, the specimens studied since antiquity.

“At the top of the staff, the tree leaves symbolize education, research and community service, which were MCO’s three goals.”

The seal, which was used from 1967 to 2005, is embedded in a glass ceremonial mace developed by famed Toledo glass sculptor Dominc Labino that was carried in MCO academic processions, including graduation, and appeared on physicians’ white coats and other regalia, official stationary and publications. That mace, I believe, is still used in College of Medicine and Life Sciences graduation ceremonies.

The blue-green MUO seal, which was developed as part of MCO’s name change to Medical University of Ohio in 2005, lasted 12 months, hardly enough time for faculty and staff to identify with it in any meaningful way before the merger.

I hope you find this information useful.
James R. Winkler, J.D.