



ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

# Tracing your medical ancestors

Updated 2023

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## Tracing your medical ancestors

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The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) is the oldest medical institution in the country. Since its foundation in 1654, its mission has been to regulate the medical profession in Ireland and to confirm the competence of those who practice medicine.

RCPI's Heritage Centre holds extensive and unique sources of information on Irish doctors from the seventeenth century onwards and is an invaluable resource for those endeavouring to trace medical ancestors.

## Before you start

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In undertaking, or commissioning, any family history research in the Heritage Centre it is important to provide as much information as possible, this will both speed up the process and increase the chance of finding relevant information.

For any search it is important to know as many of the following as possible:

- Name of the doctor
- Birth or death date, or rough period of activity (e.g. mid-eighteenth century)
- Place of residence
- Any known qualifications

## Sources of information

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RCPI's Heritage Centre holds a variety of different sources which can be of use in tracing Irish medical ancestors. The main sources are outlined below.

### The Kirkpatrick Index

A unique collection of newspaper cuttings, manuscript notes and extracts from printed works, relating to individual Irish-born doctors, collected by Dr Kirkpatrick. The index contains entries for over 10,000 Irish-born doctors from the earliest times up to the 1950s.

### The Medical Register and Medical Directories

Published annually since 1852, these list all doctors registered in the British Isles and detail qualifications and positions held. RCPI has an almost complete run of these publications up to 1980, plus two earlier Irish medical directories from 1843 and 1846.

### Royal College of Physicians of Ireland registers

These list all the doctors who have been admitted to RCPI as Licentiates, Members, Fellows or Honorary Fellows since 1692. The information contained in the registers usually consists of a name, with date of admission. Sometimes an address, qualifications or date of death is included.

### Apothecaries' Hall of Ireland registers

Apothecaries' Hall of Ireland was established in 1792 as a body to regulate the apothecary and pharmacy trade in Ireland, the Hall also awarded the recognised medical qualification of Licentiate of Apothecaries Hall (LAH) from the mid-nineteenth century to 1971. The registers of Licentiates and apothecaries examined by the Hall contain details of name, date of admission and qualification, and in many cases an address.

## Conjoint Board registers

The Conjoint Board was a joint board of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, which issued the joint Licentiate of the two Colleges from 1890. The information contained in the registers usually consists of a name, with date of qualification and an address.

## RCPI's archive collections

RCPI's substantial archival collection relates both to the history of RCPI and other medical institutions in Ireland. References to individual doctors may be found in various parts of the archive; particularly important for genealogical research are the hospital and College records.

## Dun's Library

Dun's library holds a number of printed works which can be useful in tracing Irish medics, these include

- Published histories of Irish medical schools and hospitals.
- Histories and printed alumni lists of the main Universities and College where Irish medics studied.
- The printed rolls of the Royal Army and the Indian Medical Service.

## How to search

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Genealogical searches can be conducted in two ways

### Searching with Ancestry.com

In partnership with [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) we have digitised the majority of our sources, including the Kirkpatrick Index, Medical Directories and Registers and College registers up to 1920.

All these sources can be search online via the Ancestry website. If you don't have a subscription to Ancestry yourself, many public libraries and archives do. In addition, there is free access to all of Ancestry's resources in the Heritage Centre research room.

### Searching in person

Visitors can consult the sources of information detailed above in the Heritage Centre Reading Room, under the guidance of the Heritage Centre staff. The Heritage Centre is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 1pm and from 2pm to 4pm by appointment only.

To make an appointment please email [heritagecentre@rcpi.ie](mailto:heritagecentre@rcpi.ie) or phone +353 1 6698817