UIC acquires important work from the history of surgery

By Kevin O’Brien

The Special Collections Department of the UIC Library of the Health Sciences recently acquired a copy of the first English language edition of an important book from the history of surgery, Lorenz Heister’s *A General System of Surgery in Three Parts*, published in 1743.

*Morton’s Medical Bibliography*, a prominent reference work on classic medical texts, refers to Heister (1683-1758) as the “founder of scientific surgery in Germany.” He is also acknowledged in Fielding Garrison’s *An Introduction to the History of Medicine* as the originator of the term, “tracheotomy.” Heister first published his influential book in 1718 in Nuremburg.

The English language edition of Heister’s book was published in London and features numerous finely detailed illustrations. The copy now in the UIC collection was owned by University of Illinois College of Medicine faculty member Dr. Joseph H. Kiefer and was given as a gift to his fellow faculty member Dr. Warren H. Cole of the Surgery Department in 1950. The book bears Dr. Kiefer’s bookplate and an inscription to Dr. Cole.

Plate XXXVII of *A General System of Surgery in Three Parts* illustrates varieties of bandages of the head and chest. (Photo by Max Anderson)
Dr. Kiefer was an enthusiastic collector of books and donated the entirety his collection to the Library of the Health Sciences in several installments throughout the 1970s. Dr. Cole is widely remembered as an important contributor to the fields of surgery and cancer research.

This book was purchased with funds from a small endowment benefiting the Special Collections Department.

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