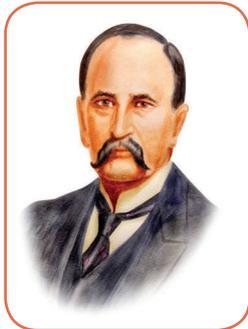


LUMINARIES IN MEDICINE

HUSSEIN A. ALGAHTANI, MD, FRCPC.



Sir William Osler

1st Baronet (1849 – 1919)

Sir William Osler was born in Ontario, Canada to Cornish parents, and became a professor of medicine at his alma mater, McGill University, at the age of 25. Following post-graduate training in London, Berlin, and Vienna, Osler returned to McGill University Faculty of Medicine as a professor in 1874. While at Montreal General Hospital he was also the pathologist and his large personal experience of autopsies laid the foundation of his subsequent brilliant career as a clinician. During this period, he created the first formalized journal club, and his reputation soon spread and it led to his election as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London at age 34. He was the third Canadian to be elected to this position as well as to the distinction of being the Goulstonian Lecturer, where his title was “Malignant Endocarditis”.

In 1884, he was appointed Chair of Clinical Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, followed by becoming one of the seven founding members of the Association of American Physicians in 1885.

In 1889, he was appointed as the first Physician-in-Chief of the new Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. There, he wrote his famous textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, probably the last of its kind to be written by a single author. In 1893, Osler was instrumental in the creation of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and became one of the school's first professors in medicine.

Corresponding author**DR. HUSSEIN A. ALGAHTANI***King Abdulaziz Medical City**P.O. Box 12723**Jeddah 21483**Saudi Arabia**e-M: halgahtani@hotmail.com*

He quickly increased his reputation as a clinician, humanitarian and teacher, and presided over a rapidly expanding domain.

While appointed as the Regius Chair of Medicine at Oxford in 1905, (at the time the most prestigious medical appointment in the English-speaking world) he then met many aspiring doctors and in 1911, he initiated the Postgraduate Medical Association, of which he was the first President.

Osler lent his name to a number of disorders, clinical signs and symptoms, as well as to a number of buildings named in his honour. His scholarship in medical history and the deep affection for his memory are perpetuated by a number of organizations including the American Osler Society and the Osler Club of London. In addition, his fine collection of old books forms the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* at McGill.

William Osler is still widely remembered as a great physician and humanitarian, and is notably for his encouragement of young doctors. He has been named the “father of modern medicine” and it is widely agreed amongst many that no physician has exerted a greater influence on how physicians should behave than Sir William Osler. His essays on the practice of medicine, his leadership in medical organizations, and his personal charisma established a paradigm that has served as a model for physician conduct at the bedside. He liked to say, “He who studies medicine without books sails an uncharted sea, but he who studies medicine without patients does not go to sea at all.” His best-known quotation was “Listen to your patient, he is telling you the diagnosis,” which emphasizes the importance of taking a good history.

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