

January 20, 2005

Professor Kenneth Munro, Acting Chair
Department of History and Classics
Room 2-28 HM Tory Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 2H4

Dear Dr. Munro,

I am writing to apply for the cross-appointed assistant professorship in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and the Department of History and Classics. My combined experiences in medical and historical disciplines, research strengths in Canadian medical history, and excellent organizational abilities, make me a strong candidate for this important position.

This cross-appointed post provides the University of Alberta with a tremendous opportunity to initiate a new history of medicine programme for students of medicine and history. I enthusiastically welcome the prospect of collaborating with clinicians, medical scientists, historians, and others to develop a teaching and research programme that offers students broad interdisciplinary perspectives on medicine and health. Within the history department I would teach undergraduate and graduate courses and assist in supervision, particularly in the field of Canadian history. In the School of Medicine and Dentistry I would offer courses that use history to augment the professional education of future physicians and dentists.

By providing students with historical perspectives on the development of health professions and the medical sciences, I would encourage both critical thinking and life long learning. In addition to discussing historical events and ideas, I would engage students in critical analyses of salient themes throughout history. Issues such as medical ethics, medicine in the marketplace, the doctor-patient relationship, rural and urban practices, and the social construction of disease provide examples of cross-cutting themes with both historical and contemporary relevance and, with such guiding themes I would design a teaching programme that complements the medical education at the University of Alberta. This objective would be achieved through innovative multi-disciplinary course offerings, medical history seminars, multi-professional team research projects, and participation in national and international conferences.

In addition to teaching objectives for medical students and history students, my long-term research goals include joint-research initiatives, research groups for clinicians, medical and human scientists, and further publications in the field (please see enclosed samples). With financial support from Associated Medical Services, the Canadian Institute of Health Research or Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, I would continue to conduct research geared towards peer-reviewed publications, and organize opportunities for scholars and students to discuss their research interests and work, such as a conference on the history of drugs and medicine.

My major field of research is in the history of Canadian psychiatry. My doctoral dissertation titled "Psychedelic Psychiatry" explores the history of LSD experimentation in Canada. In this study I examine an extensive and influential set of clinical LSD experiments conducted in Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s and, concentrate on the work of psychiatrists Humphry Osmond (who coined the term 'psychedelic') and Abram Hoffer (known best for his orthomolecular therapies). I argue that psychedelic therapies developed in sharp contrast to the growing acceptance of prescription psychoactive drugs in medicine. The analysis addresses several sub-themes including: Canadian political and social history; Canadian psychiatry and mental health reforms; medical ethics, and moral panics and their affect on medical research.

Building upon this doctoral study, my next major research project will investigate 'authority' in LSD's transformation from the clinic to the street in a monograph titled *Flashback*. By the mid-1960s the continued medical use of psychedelics gave rise to a reconsideration of scientific authority, amidst fears that medical experts endorsing the drug would validate a counter cultural revolution. The social anxieties inherent in these fears resonated across geo-political contexts. This project involves a cultural study of medical history through a careful investigation of how medical researchers contributed and reacted to drug use in the 1960s.

Presently, I am teaching a course on 'mental health' in the faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University. Of the 250 students enrolled in the course this term, the majority of them come from health science disciplines including medicine. This course has impressed upon me the academic value of discussing health and medicine from a multi-professional perspective. I believe that this approach enhances the educational experience for students of both medicine and history by encouraging students to reflect on the social and cultural significance of health and medicine in Canada. (Please see syllabus attached).

As a graduate student at McMaster University I have enjoyed the benefits of working in a multi-professional environment. My cross-affiliation with the History of Health and Medicine Unit in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences and the Department of History provided me with a rare opportunity to participate fully in both faculties, including exposure to a range of seminars, colloquia, grand rounds, coursework and teaching. While I wrote comprehensive exams in nineteenth and twentieth-century Canadian history, I also took a graduate course in the history of medicine and psychiatry and participated in a number of multi-professional functions at McMaster, the University of Toronto, and at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Toronto). Consequently I have worked on a number of committees with clinicians and historians and, I look forward to applying my organisational skills to establishing a successful collaborative research programme at the University of Alberta.

Throughout my post-secondary education I have also been actively involved in my community. I have played a leading role on a variety of committees. These experiences equipped me with important organisational and administrative skills necessary for establishing new initiatives. At McMaster University, for example, I was founder and president of a History Graduate Students' Society, an organisation devoted to fostering professional development. Additionally, in my capacity as chairperson on a Saskatchewan renewal commission I worked closely with cabinet ministers, local politicians, community leaders and members of the public. I was responsible for one section of a six part investigation that involved synthesising responses collected over a year, discussing solutions with a steering committee comprised of government officials, and publicly presenting workable strategies in the form of policy papers and recommendations.

I welcome the opportunity of an interview to discuss my vision and plans for creating a history of medicine programme in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and Department of History and Classics. Please find enclosed a copy of my *curriculum vitae*; reference letters will follow separately.

Sincerely,

Erika Dyck