

Constance Putnam grew up in the shadow of Dartmouth Medical School—figuratively and almost literally. Her father, William Putnam, was a 1932 graduate of DMS, and she recalls hearing him refer often when she was growing up to his professors and to the School's founder, Nathan Smith. Although she became an editor and writer, she absorbed more about medicine à la DMS than she realized at the time. That's partly because her family lived only 10 miles north of Dartmouth, for her father had heeded the advice of one of his professors to open a practice in Lyme, N.H. She recalled once what "an exciting place" the Hitchcock lobby was "for a 10-year-old to wait for her father while he checked on his patients."

But if Constance was in the institution's shadow as a girl, one could almost say that in recent years she has cast a shadow on the institution—even though she has never worked for Dartmouth and is not an alumna herself. How is it, then, that she's had "a pervasive and dominant influence" (as Webster's defines one sense of "shadow") on DMS?

About 20 years ago, she found herself drawn to writing on medical topics. At first her interest had a family tie. She'd discovered a cache of letters—smudged carbon copies of missives from her parents. In fact, she wrote a feature for our Winter 1988 issue based on them. It was the first of more than a dozen times her byline has appeared here.

As she grew more and more interested in medical topics, she redirected her career. She earned a Ph.D. in an interdisciplinary program at Tufts that allowed her to weave together medicine and history. Her dissertation was published as a book—*Hospice or Hemlock?* She and a classmate of her father's, the late Oliver Hayward, coauthored the first full-scale biography of DMS founder Smith—bringing much-deserved attention to an important figure in early American medicine. So, as part of DMS's bicentennial in 1997, she was commissioned to write a thorough history of the School.

The project took longer than either she or DMS anticipated—partly because she did such a painstaking job and partly because her talents began to be in demand elsewhere. For example, how could we ask her to keep going on the DMS history if it meant turning down a fellowship at London's Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine?

But the DMS history—published just a couple of months ago—was worth the wait, as the excerpt on page 34 makes clear. Constance was dogged in her effort to examine all sides of some key turning points in the institution's past. And the future will surely benefit from that understanding.

Two prominent medical historians who wrote blurbs for the book's cover agree. Yale's John Harley Warner called it "a splendid study rich in detail. In Putnam's hands, the story of Dartmouth Medical School becomes a rich sampling device that yields vivid insight into the shaping and reshaping of American medical culture." And Gert Brieger of Johns Hopkins said: "Institutional history is difficult to write—and to read. Constance Putnam's history of our fourth-oldest and one of our most distinguished medical schools has overcome both hurdles. Well written, imaginatively researched and organized, this history will be a great credit to a medical school now over 200 years old. It provides absorbing stories of internal turmoil as well as external achievements and is a welcome addition to our growing knowledge of the history of education generally and medical education particularly."

And Constance isn't our only author to recently come in for accolades. Associate Editor Laura Carter won a 2004 Will Solimene Award for Excellence from the New England chapter of the American Medical Writers Association for her cover feature in our Summer 2003 issue. The article focused on the Department of Medicine's weekly morbidity and mortality (M&M) conference. Laura put an immense amount of legwork into the article—attending M&Ms for several weeks, picking one session to cover, and then spending a lot of time (not to mention literary creativity) casting the doctors' "med-speak" shorthand as a gripping medical mystery story.

And there's good news from another of our authors. Former Olympic biathlete John Morton wrote a Fall 2003 feature about his open-heart surgery at DHMC. I just got a note from him saying that "one year and two days postop" he came in 9th out of 79 runners in his age group in the Vermont City Marathon. Clearly our writers go the extra mile—figuratively and, sometimes, literally.

DANA COOK GROSSMAN

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