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Guide to the

Gene-Ann Polk Harlem Hospital Center files

1930-2005 [bulk 1970s-1980s]

Sc MG 796

Home to Harlem Project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2015.

Summary

Creator: Polk Horne, Gene-Ann, 1926-2015

Title: Gene-Ann Polk Harlem Hospital Center files

Date: 1930-2005 [bulk 1970s-1980s]

Size: 26.1 linear feet (57 boxes, 1 volume, 1 tube)

Source: Donated by Gene-Ann Polk Horne, 2007.

Revision History: This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

Abstract: Harlem Hospital Center (HHC) is a public, municipally-owned hospital that provides a wide range of services to the Central Harlem, West Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood neighborhoods of Manhattan in New York City. Gene-Ann Polk (1926-2015) was a physician, hospital administrator, and educator known for her pioneering clinical work at HHC. The Gene-Ann Polk Harlem Hospital Center files date from 1930 to 2005 and contain memoranda, notes, reports, appointment books, ledgers, and publications that document the departments and various projects Polk administrated.

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Language of the Material: English

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Related Materials:

Gene-Ann Polk Papers and Susan Smith McKinney Steward Society records, 1946-2004. The Legacy Center, Drexel University College of Medicine.

Gene-Ann Polk Papers, 1945-53. The Legacy Center, Drexel University College of Medicine.

Gene-Ann Polk, Voices of the Foundation. Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine. Center for the History of Medicine, The Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine.

Creator History

Harlem Hospital Center (HHC), founded in 1887, is a public, municipally-owned hospital that provides a wide range of services to the Central Harlem, West Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood neighborhoods of Manhattan in New York City. HHC is a member of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, and is affiliated with Columbia University as a teaching facility.

Gene-Ann Polk Horne (1926-2015) was a physician, hospital administrator, and educator known for her pioneering clinical work at HHC. She worked professionally under her maiden name. Polk received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College in 1948 and her Doctor of Medicine degree from Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1952. From 1953 to 1968, Polk was a resident and then attending pediatrician at HHC. Polk was the first professor of clinical pediatrics at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (1962).

After pursuing a Master of Arts degree in public health from Columbia in 1968, Polk took on administrative roles at HHC, including director of Pediatric Ambulatory Care (1968-1975), director of Pediatrics (1975-1978), and director of Ambulatory Care Services (1978-1994). In the 1980s and 1990s, Polk served on the HHC's Utilization Review Committee (URC), Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC), and a few others. The URC monitored medical staff practices and evaluated patient care. The CAC collected artifacts and artwork for the hospital, answered requests for historical information, and created an archival calendar that highlighted key events from the hospital's history.

Polk was the recipient of numerous awards for her work, and in 1994 when she retired, she was honored at Columbia through emerita status. During her career, Polk sustained a commitment to working in a predominately underserved black community. Many of the programs and initiatives she led continue to shape the operations and practices of HHC. Polk's research and studies influenced the neonatal and pediatric outpatient services. She was also instrumental in the development of the Harlem Primary Care Network (HPCN), a 1979 Urban Health Initiative grant-awarded program administered by HHC to address high morbidity and mortality rates. The HPCN set up a network throughout the Harlem community in locations such as the Grant Houses Clinic. HPCN impacted the primary-care models practiced today. After retirement, Polk maintained her connection to HHC through the CAC, and helped raise money for restorations of the hospital's murals created during the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Scope and Content Note

The Gene-Ann Polk Harlem Hospital Center files date from 1930 to 2005 (bulk dates 1970s-1980s) and contain memoranda, notes, reports, appointment books, ledgers, and publications that document the departments and various projects Polk administrated, as well as some early HHC history. This collection is not considered HHC's official records, nor is it a comprehensive representation of Polk's entire career.

The bulk of the collection relates to the Ambulatory Care Services (ACS) and Pediatrics, and recounts the day-to-day operations of Polk's work as director of these departments. The ACS outgoing memos and internal correspondence discuss a range of issues from the navigation of a budget crisis, the requests for certain equipment and supplies, to the ongoing changes in personnel and services. There are grant applications, annual reports, meeting minutes, and the documentation of certain services such as the drug abuse programs. Some of these files are from Polk's predecessor Henry L. Hines (early 1970s).

The Pediatrics material showcases Polk's early research and case studies. The collection features a copy of her paper, "The Course of the Heroin Withdrawal Syndrome in Newborn Infants Treated with Phenobarbital or Chlorpromazine;" her notes and drafts of the Cervical Pott's Disease case study presentation at The Bronx Pediatric Society (1955); and notes for the case study of "Narcotic Addiction in the Newborn." Polk's "Renal Tuberculosis in Childhood: A Case Report," co-written with George Weiss, was later published in the Harlem Hospital Bulletin (1958; case studies b.46 f.1-4). These files also hold agendas and typed presentation notes for conferences hosted by the Pediatrics department and Pediatric Ambulatory Care.

The development and management of several community programs are documented in the collection, including the Harlem Primary Care Network (HPCN), and the New York State Primary Ambulatory Care Program (better known as Ghetto Medicine). The scope of Polk's role as director of ACS included overseeing these additional programs. HPCN materials consist of project descriptions, proposals, network agreements, job advertisements, status reports, management summaries that track visit numbers, and governing board meeting minutes. Ghetto Medicine, a state-wide program that financed health care in medically underserved areas, is represented through correspondence, notes, budget reports, and contract information for personnel compensated through the allocated funds from this program.

Polk's participation in several committees at the HHC is reflected through the Utilization Review Committee (URC) and the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) files. There are surveys, audits, reports, and meeting minutes from the URC; and CAC meeting agendas, memos, and outlines for the archival calendar. Other CAC materials in the collection consist of a few photographs of patients receiving care; and HHC personnel index cards (1930s-1940s) that contain medical school information, title, services, and salary rates.

Polk's yearly calendars account for her daily appointments and meetings across all the roles she fulfilled. Additional conference materials contextualize her work. For example, the 1982 National Health Care Service Corporation presentation notes (b.37 f.3) discuss some of the challenges the hospital faced in serving the Harlem community, and the development of the HPCN.

The NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation files and memoranda from various departments pertain to hospital-wide subjects and issues. There are also a few HHC publications, including the 1969 master plan, and a few copies of *The Harlem Hospital Bulletin*.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject or format.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Administrative records
Annual reports
Correspondence
Ledgers (account books)
Memorandums
Minutes (administrative records)
Notes (documents)
Photographs
Programs (documents)

Subjects

African American women physicians
Clinics
Hospital administrators
Hospital and community
Hospitals -- Administration
Public hospitals -- Medical staff
Public hospitals -- Outpatient services
Women educators

Geographic Names

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)

Names

College of Physicians and Surgeons in the City of New York
Columbia University Medical Center
Harlem Hospital Center (New York, N.Y.)
New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

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