

Reflections on Medicine, History, & Society

“We will tolerate no Jews here”: A History of Medical Education Antisemitism in the U.S. and Canada



Lecture from Dr. Edward Halperin

Dr. Halperin is Chancellor and CEO of New York Medical College; professor of radiation oncology, pediatrics, and history, and holds an endowed chair in biomedical ethics after the Holocaust.

Saul Jarcho, M.D. (1906-2000) was a respected internist and medical historian. In 1959 he weighed the historical evidence regarding an alleged antisemitic quota to limit the admission of American and Canadian Jews to medical schools in the first half of the 20th century. He concluded “it must be admitted that the evidence of discriminatory admission practice by medical schools [directed against Jews] is not of the precision or concreteness which the historian requires”. This lecture will demonstrate that Dr. Jarcho was wrong. Dr. Halperin will present the evidence for the existence of an antisemitic medical school admissions quota. In an era where approximately 60% of the medical school applicants were Jews, the quota capped Jewish enrollment at 5% to 20%. Dr. Halperin will describe dramatic episodes such as the 1927 assault on the Jewish interns of Kings County Hospital and the medical interns’ strike in Montreal in 1934 in support of excluding a Jewish doctor from the new interns’ class. After explaining how and why the quota ended in the decades after World War II, he will consider themes of importance today such as the relevance of the history of the Jewish medical school quota to the White Supremacist Movement, controversies regarding immigration, the debate over affirmative action in higher education, and the Supreme Court’s Students for Fair Admissions decisions which invoked the antisemitic quota and where supporters of the lawsuit referred to “Asian Americans as the new Jews”.

Thursday, November 13, 2025

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Gordon Hall - Waterhouse Room

25 Shattuck Street, Boston

& streamed on Zoom

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