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Chicago Editorial MY SON, THE DOCTOR

Claire R. Aronson

NOT SINCE THE TWELFTH CENTURY has Jewish life produced a man like Maimonides, the famed Spanish writer, philosopher and physician, revered as much for his contributions to Jewish thought and philosophy as for his medical knowledge and ability. Doctors have always been regarded with respect and esteem by the Jewish people, and through the years many Jewish doctors have made notable contributions towards the advancement of medicine. However their efforts and participation, other than financial, in the mainstream of Jewish life has, for the most part, been somewhat limited.



Mrs. Aronson

SURPRISINGLY, though, contributions by doctors to the fields of medicine and Judaica is more extensive than the general public may realize. This fact was uncovered when the recently established Maimonides award Committee for outstanding contributions to medicine and religion, selected the first recipient of this award. A joint project of Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center and the College of Jewish Studies, it was initiated by Dr. Robert S. Mendelsohn, a pediatrician on the staff of the hospital and a graduate of the College of Jewish Studies.

THE SELECTIONS COMMITTEE of which Dr. Mendelsohn is the chairman and which includes Dr. Alex. Tulskey and Dr. Irving Wolin, solicited 80 medical schools and teaching hospitals for nominees for this award. Over half responded with names of candidates, an indication that much more is being done in this field than was generally known.

DR. HARRY A. SAVITZ, chairman of the Department of Rehabilitation of Boston's Beth Israel Hospital, will receive the first Maimonides award. It will be presented to him for "outstanding contributions to medicine and religion" Sunday afternoon, Sept. 19, in the Rothschild Auditorium at Michael Reese Hospital Nurses' Residence. Members of the Board of Directors and medical staff of the Hospital, Trustees of the College of Jewish Studies, representatives of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, of the American Medical Association and other distinguished persons in the medical and Jewish fields, have been invited to this unique event.

FOR THIS OCCASION Dr. Savitz will present a paper whose title is in itself unusual: "Medicine as an Intellectual Outlet of the Jew." For almost half a century Dr. Savitz has been writing on the relationship between Judaism and medicine, on such subjects as "Psychology in the Talmud," "The Jew in Medicine," "Role of the Jewish Physician in the Progress of His People," "The Cultural Background of the Patient as Part of the Physicians Armamentarium," "The Physician and Prayer," "Saul Tchernichovsky" (in the New England Journal of Medicine, 1944), "Maimonides' Hygiene of the Soul," "Physicians in the Zionist Movement," etc. His papers reflect not only a thorough grounding in Jewish concepts, but a keen interest in the impact Judaism has on medicine and vice versa.

THE MAIMONIDES AWARD is expected to be an annual event. In time, enough interest can be created, we are sure, to mark this presentation ceremony with a large public function. We also feel that in the Chicago area we have a number of physicians who should be nominated for such an award, now that it will become known to our community. We think that the idea is an excellent one and applaud it heartily.

THE IMPLICATIONS go far beyond the mere recognition of a physician's interest in medicine and in Judaism. It should stimulate interest on the part of physicians to explore this subject in depth, leading possibly to greater understanding of our Jewish heritage and more respect for its effect on modern living patterns.

WHO KNOWS, it may even uncover another Maimonides!