

Herman L. Kretschmer: Alumnus, Distinguished Physician, Medical Researcher, Author, and Philanthropist

By: Ron Sims, Special Collections Librarian

The current exhibit (*) in the Eckenhoff Reference Room on the first level in Galter Health Sciences Library highlights the pharmacy and medical school student notebooks of **Dr. Herman L. Kretschmer**. Through images and artifacts, embark upon a journey from an earlier century where Dr. Kretschmer completed his pharmacy degree in 1900 and medical degree in 1904.



Dr. Kretschmer (PhG, 1900; MD, 1904; DSc 1944) was born in Chicago in 1879. Except for a period of military service as a captain in the Marine Corps in World War I, he spent his entire life in Chicago. He was a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Pharmacy and received the Doctor of Medicine degree from Northwestern University Medical School. He did post-graduate work in Vienna, 1906-1907, and in Berlin, 1907. His specialty practice was genitourinary surgery. He was urologist to Presbyterian Hospital, genitourinary surgeon to Alexian Brothers Hospital, consultant at Children's Memorial Hospital, and consulting urologist to U.S. Public Health Service Hospital No. 76. For many years he was professor of urology at Rush Medical College both independently and in association with the University of Illinois College of Medicine. One of the organizers of the American Board of Urology, he served as its president from 1934 to 1945.

He became one of the first clinical professors to limit his work to urology and he lived to see his chosen specialty advance from a minor to a major field of clinical endeavor. Dr. Kretschmer's professional career ran parallel with the growth of this new surgical specialty and he played an active part in this development.

In 1942, he received a Merit Award from the Alumni Association in recognition of exemplary achievements and in 1944, the University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science degree as “a loyal alumnus of Northwestern University whose contributions to science, teaching, and organized medicine have brought great credit to his Alma Mater.”

In his will, Dr. Kretschmer made a generous provision to establish the “Lucy and Edwin Kretschmer Fund of Northwestern University Medical School for special studies and investigations in the field of urology.” The residency training program in urology was developed by the Kretschmer Urological Research Laboratories. The medical school’s library became steward to many of his personal items including papers, note-books, and his rare book collection in urology. In 1963, **John T. Grayhack, MD**, was the first recipient of the Herman L. Kretschmer Professorship in Urology.

Dr. Kretschmer reminds us...“Gentle, Doctor, it makes lots of difference which end of that thing you’re on.”

*** NOTE: The Kretschmer exhibit was available for viewing during regular library hours through the end of July 2014.**

Historical items comprising books, photographs, instruments, and equipment are available for study and viewing in Special Collections on the second level in Galter Health Sciences Library. Please call (312) 503-8133 or [email](#) for an appointment with the Special Collections Librarian.



**Dr. Kretschmer as a student in Histology lab, 1902
(wearing bow tie in foreground)**

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