Preface and Acknowledgments

The tradition of an academic institution is based on the particular and frequently unique characters of the men [sic] who make up its community of scholars. Long before it became a medical school Mount Sinai was, besides being a hospital, an academic institution dedicated to teaching and research. The unusual aura of The Mount Sinai Hospital was based upon this uniqueness.¹

It is the men and women of The Mount Sinai Hospital, their unique characters, and especially their accomplishments, that this book celebrates. Nowhere is the expression “We stand on the shoulders of giants” more true than at Mount Sinai. The 150th anniversary of the Hospital, in 2002, provides an ideal opportunity to honor those who established the clinical reputation of The Mount Sinai Hospital of New York and paved the way for the academic health center of today.

The goal of this book is to describe the scientific contributions of the staff of The Mount Sinai Hospital over the past 150 years. This is not a history of the institution, per se. In 1952, two publications heralded the one-hundredth anniversary of the Hospital. The First 100 Years of the Mount Sinai Hospital of New York: 1852–1952, by Joseph Hirsh and Beka Doherty, detailed the expansion and development of the institution in the context of the growth and changes occurring in New York and in medicine.² In November 1952, the American Journal of Medicine³ reprinted a dozen seminal articles by members of the staff and made reference to a number of others. Other than our own Levy Library reprint collection, there is no other compendium of the important works produced by the staff. We hope that this volume will help to fill that void.
By whatever criteria one wishes to use—bed complement, size, reputation of its staff, or scientific productivity—Mount Sinai ranks among the elite institutions of the world. From its earliest days and throughout the first half-century of its existence, the reputation of the Hospital was essentially a reflection of the clinical repute of a distinguished staff of outstanding physicians, selected by the lay board from the schools and hospitals of New York City. Many of these physicians had been part of a major migration of clinicians from European centers of learning that took place in the middle of the nineteenth century; these professionals came to the United States to establish their careers in the more liberal environment of the New World.

But clinicians alone would never have been able to sustain the reputation of the institution. It is to the credit of the institutional leadership at all levels—lay board, medical and nursing staff, and administration—that as medicine evolved, the Hospital not only kept up with the changing milieu but continuously positioned itself at the front edge of scientific progress. As laboratory science developed in the early part of the twentieth century, the laboratories were placed in the hands of highly skilled specialists in laboratory medicine. In 1944, when it became apparent that clinical teaching had reached a level that could no longer be sustained by an all-voluntary faculty, the trustees decided to begin appointing salaried physicians as chiefs of service. And when it became apparent that a stand-alone hospital could not keep up with the rapid progress of science in the second half of the twentieth century, the Hospital’s leadership was almost unanimous in agreeing to found a medical school, not only to keep up with the science of medicine but also to enable the Hospital to continue to attract the best and the brightest of medical school graduates to the many clinical training programs of the Hospital and then, later, to retain the best of them on the staff, because excellence in patient care was, and remains, of paramount importance.

Over the past 150 years, the institution’s progress appears to fall into clearly defined periods: 1855 to 1893, when the first laboratory was created; 1893 to 1926, when the now multiple laboratories were placed in the hands of full-time specialists; 1926 to 1944, when the first full-time chiefs were appointed to the two divisions of the Medical Service and the full-time “system” began; 1944 to 1963, when the charter for the Medical School was obtained; and 1963 to the present, during which time the Medical Center reached its current state of maturity. While a
chronological history emphasizing those periods would get across the intellectual vibrancy of the institution, we chose to tell this story on a departmental basis. This gave us the opportunity not only to present the scientific productivity of the members of each specialty group but also to trace the development of the departments and the various training programs, which now number more than seventy and which train more than eight hundred residents and fellows each year. Still, this approach tends to obscure the richness of the interaction of the departments with the laboratories and with one another, and the workings of the institution as a whole.

There are many facets of Mount Sinai that cannot be adequately represented in a volume that has been deliberately kept within a size limitation. While the exact number can never be ascertained, considerably more than 250,000 papers and books have been published over the years by Mount Sinai staff. We have attempted to highlight those that we deemed most significant—those on the many syndromes, diseases, and other “firsts” that have come from Mount Sinai—and we hope that none have been forgotten. We have taken the additional step of creating a Web site, www.mountsinaihistory.org, to serve as an adjunct to this volume. The site will contain annotated citations to works that we have uncovered but could not include in the print edition, as well as more inclusive biographical and pictorial information relating to Mount Sinai physicians and scientists. We thank the staff of Mount Sinai’s Janet W. and Gustave L. Levy Library for their help with the Web site.

Another area that cannot be covered adequately is that of the many trainees who have left Mount Sinai and gone on to great success in their chosen fields. It is a duty dear to the hearts of the physicians who have served Mount Sinai over the years to teach young doctors and scientists, and many consider this group of trainees to be part of their legacy to medicine. Unfortunately, there is not enough space to list all those who have studied here, and the risk of inadvertently omitting even a few has caused us to exclude such lists altogether.

Another omission is the history of the founding of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and its effect on the Hospital. In the interest of space, we have left the story of the School, the basic science departments, and the Departments of Genetics, Health Policy, and Community and Preventive Medicine for another time. We hope to produce a publication on these topics in 2003, for the fortieth anniversary of the School. We have also omitted the history of the Department of Nursing
because two comprehensive books have already been written that doc-
ument the monumental contributions the Mount Sinai nurses have
made to patient care in peace time and in two wars, bringing distinction
to themselves and to the Hospital.5

Finally, every institution has a culture of its own; Mount Sinai is no
exception. When word of the writing of this volume circulated, many
people volunteered anecdotes and stories. We decided to include as
many stories as possible, but these have had to take second place to our
original goal of telling the scientific tale of the Hospital. We have tried
to get across the feel of the institution in the chapter “The Years of the
Giants,” but we recognize that this does not do justice to the institution,
or to the rich treasure trove of material available.

We have been incredibly fortunate in obtaining help from individu-
als in every department, and we would like to acknowledge them here: Raymond Miller, in Anesthesiology; Paul Kirschner and Robert Litwak,
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the respective chairperson, and many have provided thoughtful com-
ments and corrections. If there are errors or omissions in this book, they
are ours; if there is value, we thank those who helped us.

Over the years, a number of departmental histories have been writ-
ten, most of them published in The Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine. With
the help of the original authors, we have expanded these articles to
meet the goals of this volume. We are therefore indebted to Sherman
Kupfer, M.D., Editor of the Journal, for blanket permission to reproduce
these revised articles.
This book also could not have been written were it not for Dr. Albert S. Lyons, Emeritus Clinical Professor of Surgery, who in the early 1960s had the prescience to convince the Trustees and administration of the Hospital to set aside money and space to develop an institutional archive. Not only was Al Lyons our only archivist for many years, gathering material that might have been lost; he also created a library of oral history tapes that today contains more than eighty-five interviews with physicians, administrators, and trustees of the institution. In the 1980s, he again took the initiative in securing the appointment of a professional archivist to carry on his work. All those interested in the history of Mount Sinai are truly in his debt.

Early on in the preparation of the book, Lily Saint, Joshua Richter, and Quynh-Nhu Thi Pham (Mount Sinai School of Medicine, 2002) were of great assistance in researching the history of the Department of Surgery. Alicia Cohen (Mount Sinai School of Medicine, 2004) prepared the chapter on the Department of Geriatrics. A major contributor to our efforts has been Kristin Wilson. Working with us for sixteen months on a full-time basis, she took on major responsibilities for a number of the chapters, conducting research and interviews and writing the first drafts. Her efforts on our behalf have made an enormous difference in our ability to produce the work on time. Harriet Aufses read, and reread, every revision of every section; her comments were invaluable.

Clearly we have benefited from the help of many who have supported us, sustained us, and pointed us in directions we never knew existed. Among these, we must number the leadership of the Hospital who have allowed us to devote our resources to this work. John W. Rowe, M.D., CEO and President of the Medical Center from 1988 to 2000, and Barry Freedman, President of The Mount Sinai Hospital, encouraged and sponsored our efforts to go ahead with this project. Gary Rosenberg, Ph.D., Senior Vice President of the Medical Center, has been an invaluable resource. We also owe thanks to Nathan Kase, M.D., Dean of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine from 1987 to 1997 and currently interim CEO and President of the Medical Center and interim Dean of the Medical School, and Arthur Rubenstein, M.D., Dean of the School from 1997 to 2001, for their understanding of our inability to include the history of the School in this project. We are indebted to New York University Press and to its very talented staff. The assistance we have received from Eric Zinner, Editor-in-Chief, Emily Park, Editorial Assistant,
and Despina Papazoglou Gimbel, Managing Editor, has been vital to our ability to have the publication ready for our anniversary year. We have tried to determine when something was truly a first and have investigated many claims for priority. We have attempted to give credit when due and to highlight work that has been forgotten by the passing of time. While we may not claim total impartiality, we have tried to exercise diligence and fairness. We regret that, due to space constraints, the story often leaps from one Chief to the next, leaving out many who dedicated their lives to furthering both medical science and Mount Sinai. Their legacy lies not in these pages but in the people whose lives they have touched and made better.