

Kenneth COLLINS

Joshua O. Leibowitz (1895–1993). From Riga to Jerusalem: A Life in Medicine and Medical History

Joshua Leibowitz was born in Vilnius in 1895 but the death of his mother caused the family to relocate to Riga where he arrived as a young child and he spent all his school years there. In 1913 he began his medical studies at the University of Heidelberg. As a Russian citizen his studies were interrupted by internment and he was only able to resume them in 1918, receiving his MD degree in 1922. His medical training at Heidelberg accommodated courses on philosophy, the history of art as well as rabbinical learning, topics which served him well in his future life.

His medical interests ranged through internal medicine, psychiatry and neurology. His post-graduate years as Director of the Jewish Sanatorium in Bad-Homburg brought him into contact with the Judisches Lehrhaus of Frankfurt-am-Main where he taught Hebrew literature and Jewish thought. He was already a serious student in the history of medicine and his rare book library came with him when he fled Nazi Germany and emigrated to Palestine in 1935.

He was co-founder of the Israel Society for the History of Medicine and Science in 1947 and of its journal *Korot* in 1952. He attended all the Congresses of the International Society for the History of Medicine from the 12th Congress in Amsterdam in 1950 to the 28th Congress in Paris in 1982, delighting in opportunities to meet colleagues and extend his own work. He was for several years President of the short-lived International Academy of the History of Medicine in the 1960s. Most of his contributions covered a wide range of Jewish medical topics especially relating to the mediaeval period but also included more general medical topics usually related to heart disease. His bibliography of articles, reviews and other publications includes over two hundred items.

His particular blend of medical, linguistic and historical scholarship was representative of that Baltic-Jewish tradition of learning which contributed so much to European culture before its dispersal and decimation by the Holocaust. This presentation will review his life, his background in Riga, his scholarship and contribution to the history of medicine.

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