

The Anatomy of Exclusion: A History of Medical Education Antisemitism in the United States and Canada

Guiding Questions for Reflection

Use these questions to spark discussion or personal reflection before, during, or after the lecture.

Contemporary Connections

- How might learning about the history of these admissions quotas prompt curiosity for you about how exclusion has operated for other groups in medical education? What parallels, questions, or patterns to today does this history bring up?

Cultural Understandings

- During the quota system in the early to mid-20th century, Jewish students were 30 to 60% of medical school applicants. How might religious and cultural values impact one's decision to study and practice medicine?
- How can learning alongside peers of different religious and cultural identities impact a future doctor?

Lessons for Faculty Practice

- What lessons does the history of antisemitic exclusion in medical education offer faculty about more broadly recognizing and addressing exclusion within educational institutions?

This guide accompanies the lecture "The Anatomy of Exclusion: A History of Medical Education Antisemitism in the United States and Canada," presented by Dr. Edward Halperin, M.D., M.A.. in recognition of Jewish American Heritage Month. We invite you to reflect on the history and continued impact of Jewish exclusion and antisemitism in the medical community.

Recommended Resources

Explore these articles, podcasts, and tools to deepen your understanding:

The Jewish Problem in U.S. Medical Education, 1920-1955

Leaders of U.S. medical schools rationalized their objections to the admission of Jewish students on the grounds of proportional representation as well as the classic anti-Semitic canards of Jewish defensiveness, bookishness, poor manual dexterity, and avarice. The Jewish community, in response, was divided between those who accepted the quota and those who vigorously fought back. Here, Dr. Edward Halperin examines the historical evidence concerning the quota, how it was justified, and the nature of the Jewish community's response.

[Learn more at the Journal of the History of Medicine & Allied Sciences](#)

The Rise and Decline of the Jewish Quota in Medical School Admissions

During the second quarter of this century, American medical schools were a little sung battleground in the nation's struggle for civil rights. The confrontation left a lasting mark on American life. It established a legal framework to open society up to future generations of all stripes. New public institutions for professional and graduate education were brought into being. Schools had to re-examine some of their own preconceptions such as what, in fact, are the desirable attributes of a physician, and how does one predict these?

[Read more in the Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine](#)

"We Do Not Want Him Because He Is a Jew": The Montreal Interns' Strike of 1934

Speeches by modern-day White supremacists often include such statements as "Jews will not replace us." In 1934, the French-speaking medical interns of Montreal's Roman Catholic hospitals went on strike because, they alleged, a Jew "replaced" a Roman Catholic French Canadian. The strike buttressed the case in the first half of the 20th century for American and Canadian Jewish hospitals and medical schools to ensure the education of Jewish physicians, reminds us of the origins of the slogans of modern White supremacists, and reinforces the historical basis of efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in medical education.

[Read more in the Annals of Internal Medicine](#)

