For Immediate Release

New book on Indiana’s History of Humane Treatment of the Mentally Ill

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In 1896 a pioneering superintendent of the Central Indiana Asylum for the Insane established a state-of-the-art facility with a mission not really common in the 19th century. Dr. George Edenharter planned, raised funds for and built the Pathological Department on the grounds of the asylum and began using the methods of science to try to help inmates—or possibly cure them. A new book by two leading Indiana psychiatrists explores the history of science in the Hoosier state to help the mentally ill. Dr. Edenharter’s Dream: How Science Improved the Humane Care of the Mentally Ill in Indiana, 1896-2012, by Dr. Lucy Jane King and Dr. Alan Schmetzer, explores more than a century of care and science through facilities, experimentation and the work of specific researchers.

This book is being released to commemorate the opening of the new Indiana University Medical Center being built on the 16th street campus and opening in late summer. Drs. King and Schmetzer will appear at events for the book as part of the opening activities.

Early experimenters depended on autopsies of those inmates who had died in the Central Indiana Hospital, using microscopes and slide samples. Interestingly, researchers today have begun again using some of the many hundred-year-old samples stored at the old Pathological Department, now the Indiana Medical History Museum. The book moves from these experiments through early decades of the twentieth century, when psychiatrists attempted to kill syphilis by giving affected patients malaria, which then killed the syphilis. The histories of Larue Carter Hospital and other Indiana psychiatric facilities are explored with copious use of photos.

Dr. Edenharter’s Pathological Department was the first facility in the United States to provide a three-fold approach to improving the care of the mentally ill in one building. The superintendent set up facilities for clinical and laboratory experimentation combined with teaching in neuroscience, neuropathology and psychiatry, all on the grounds of a hospital so the findings could be correlated with clinical practice.

Dr. Schmetzer was director of Larue Carter at one time and served on the committee to investigate concerns at Central State Hospital before it closed.

Dr. King is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry Emerita at Indiana University School of Medicine and a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. She is the author of From Under the Cloud at Seven Steeples, 1878-1885: The Particularly Saddened Life of Anna Agnew at the Indiana Hospital for the Insane.

The book has scores of photographs both black and white and color, 206 pages.

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