

acupuncture. It was Ten Rhijne's work that actually provided the West with the first detailed description of Chinese and Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion, and the first illustrations of the acu-points.

Cleyer's book contains sections on Chinese theories of medicine, the materia medica and diagnostic methods. There are 36 drawings showing the appearance of the tongue in certain pathological conditions. Special attention was given by Chinese physicians to the coating, shape and colour of a patient's tongue, with specific areas believed to reflect the health of corresponding organs. There

are also 30 plates that include several anatomical illustrations. What was most confusing to European eyes, however, were the first acupuncture charts to be published in the West. These were not explained by Cleyer, and many thought them also to be anatomical – a mistake that led to much criticism of Chinese medicine by Western readers.

One aspect of the work that did have a major influence on at least one European physician was the importance the Chinese put on monitoring the pulse in diagnosis. Sir John Floyer incorporated passages from Cleyer's text in his classic work

*The physician's pulse-watch*, published in 1707. Floyer entitled part three of his work 'The Chinese art of feeling the pulse is describ'd; and the imitation of their practice of physick, which is grounded on the observation of the pulse, is recommended'.

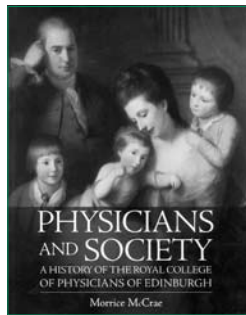
Despite its faults and controversies, Cleyer's *Specimen medicinae sinicae* was the first major contribution to the understanding of Chinese medicine, and the first illustrated book on the subject to be published in Europe.

**John Dallas**, Rare Books Librarian, RCPE; j.dallas@rcpe.ac.uk

## BOOK REVIEW: Morrice McCrae, *Physicians and Society*

The prospect of reviewing Morrice McCrae's history of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh did not appeal for Morrice is an old friend, his book had the backing of the College Council and he was appointed Historian to the College during my Presidency. The consequences of not liking his book might be dire, and I began reading it with some trepidation. I need not have worried for *Physicians and Society* is a riveting read that can be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in the history of medicine, doctors, institutions and the societies of which they are a part. This book is about a Scottish College and Scottish physicians, and it should be required reading for the leaders of the RCPE, but it can be recommended strongly to the College membership and to anyone seriously interested in the history of medicine.

Many themes run through this book, including the importance of individuals, of persistence in pursuing worthwhile goals, of the necessity for unwelcome compromises and the need to expect opposition to even – perhaps particularly – the best of intentions. All of these were exemplified in the founding of the College itself, which took 60 years including three failed attempts before



the Royal Charter was granted by King Charles II in 1681. Individuals were important both in themselves and because of their broad education and network of contacts. Robert Sibbald, generally regarded as the 'father' of the College, studied in Leiden and Paris; his cousin Andrew Balfour was a pupil of William Harvey in London, where he was well known to the founders of the Royal Society; Archibald Pitcairn, a founding Fellow, was a mathematician and friend of Isaac Newton. In the 18th century, Fellows such as William Cullen and Joseph Black were friends of other major Enlightenment figures such as Adam Smith, David Hume and James Hutton.

Societies, however, contain competing groups and interests, and the College discovered this when its objectives clashed with opposing political, economic, religious and even medical interests. Indeed, internal divisions have at times brought the College almost to its knees.

So what has this book to say of the RCPE's achievements? More than enough to inspire its current worldwide membership to emulate the achievements of the past. These include the establishment of the Edinburgh

University Medical School and the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh teaching hospital, which emphasised bedside teaching; an insistence on proper medical education and assessment; the development of medical ethics as an essential part of a profession with societal obligations; an obligation to provide free medical care for the poor; and the development of public health. In the latter part of the 19th century, as Edinburgh medicine lost ground to continental Europe, the College set up the first medical research laboratory in the UK, which operated successfully for 60 years.

The Royal Colleges in the UK stand at a crossroads in respect of their relevance to UK medicine, and while the past does not provide a blueprint for the future, it has a lot to say about the way in which a profession contributes to society. Dr McCrae has produced an important book in this regard (hopefully the typos will be corrected in future editions). It traces the College history to the end of the 19th century, but it is to be hoped that he will bring this history up to the present in an era in which the state dominates but does not perform well.

**Niall Finlayson**, Editor, *The Journal*

To order copies of the book from the College, please contact reception on 0131 225 7324 or email [reception@rcpe.ac.uk](mailto:reception@rcpe.ac.uk).