Transformations in American Medicine: From Benjamin Rush to William Osler

by Lester S King

Sir William Osler (pronounced ÅŒsler) was a seminal figure in internal medicine. But who was he and why does he continue to be an important influence in internal medicine to this day? William Osler lived from 1849 to 1918, and during his career he helped create the foundation of the discipline of internal medicine and was also instrumental in developing the system of clinical medical education that continues to be used today. Born in Canada and receiving his medical degree from McGill University in Montreal, Osler subsequently traveled to Europe for additional training, a common practice by North American physicians at the time given the advanced state of medical knowledge and clinical education there compared to Canada and the United States.