

**Irena Koprowska collection on
American Cancer Society-Veterans
Administration lung cancer screening study**

SC.002

Finding aid prepared by Michael Peters and Jonathan Helmke.

Last updated on November 17, 2011.

Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

2011.06.15

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	7
Collection Inventory.....	8

Summary Information

Repository	Drexel University: College of Medicine Legacy Center
Creator	Koprowska, Irena, 1917-
Title	Irena Koprowska collection on American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration lung cancer screening study
Call number	SC.002
Date [inclusive]	1958-1964
Extent	2.4 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Dr. Irena Grasberg Koprowska (born 1917) worked in pathology and participated in a study on the early detection and diagnosis of lung cancer: The American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration Cooperative Study for the Evaluation of Radiologic and Sputum Cytologic Screening in the Early Detection of Lung Cancer while working at Cornell University. The Irena Koprowska collection on American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration Lung Cancer Screening Study consists of correspondence, data sheets, supporting notes, and reports dating from 1958 to 1964. The collection also includes microscope slides and photographic prints of the microscope slides. The material focuses on the lung cancer screening study conducted from 1958 to 1868 by Dr. Irena Koprowska, in conjunction with Dr. George Papanicolaou's laboratory at Cornell, where she worked before coming to Hahnemann Medical College. The two co-authored a case report of the earliest diagnosis of lung cancer by a sputum smear. It was noted that study had only negative results, and it</p>

has been asserted that results were not valuable, in themselves, in the early diagnosis of lung cancer.

Cite as:

Irena Koprowska collection on American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration lung cancer screening study, 1958-1964, HU.SC.002, Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine and Homeopathy.

Biography/History

Dr. Irena Grasberg Koprowska (born 1917) worked in pathology and participated in a study on the early detection and diagnosis of lung cancer: The American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration Cooperative Study for the Evaluation of Radiologic and Sputum Cytologic Screening in the Early Detection of Lung Cancer while working at Cornell University.

Dr. Irena Grasberg Koprowska was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1917, the daughter of Henryk and Eugenia Grasberg. She obtained her early education in Warsaw and attended Warsaw University where she met, and married, her fellow medical student Hilary Koprowski in 1938. She received her M.D. from Warsaw University in 1939.

As a result of Germany's invasion in Poland and the start of World War II, Dr. Koprowska and her husband moved to France where she completed an internship at the Willejuif Lunatic Asylum in Seine, France. As was to become a common occurrence, Dr. Koprowska relocated due to her husband's career. They moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Dr. Koprowska took a job as assistant pathologist at Rio de Janeiro's City Hospital Miguel Cuoto, working from 1942 to 1944. In order to "develop expertise without the guidance of textbooks or formal instruction," Dr. Kowprowska performed numerous autopsies, (NLM).

In 1944, again because of her husband's job, and despite being offered an assistant professorship at a medical school in Rio de Janeiro, Koprowska moved to New York. Dr. Koprowska volunteered at the Department of Pathology at Cornell University and eventually "obtained her credentials as a pathologist," (NLM). It was during her tenure as research fellow during the 1950s, that she met and began working with Dr. George N. Papanicolao, M.D., inventor of the Pap smear. Their work together resulted in a co-authored case report regarding the earliest diagnosis of lung cancer by a sputum smear. As a result of her work, "she became a talented teacher of cytopathology, and a well-respected researcher and diagnostician, specializing in the early detection of cancers of the uterus, cervix and lung" (NLM).

A project on which Dr. Koprowska worked was the American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration Cooperative Study for the Evaluation of Radiologic and Sputum Cytologic Screening in the Early Detection of Lung Cancer, which was initiated “in order to compare the relative efficacy of semi-annual sputum cytologic and radiologic screening in the early detection of lung cancer and to determine whether they would be practical for mass screening of a non-patient population group,” (Lilienfeld, page 1). In addition to many technical goals, the study also hoped to “determine the degree of correlation of history of respiratory symptoms and/or smoking history data with lung cancer detected by screening methods,” (Lilienfeld, page 1). The study annually screened residents of six Veterans Administration hospitals over a three-year period. According to notes found in Dr. Koprowska’s papers, the study proved that x-rays were not useful in early diagnosis of lung cancer.

In 1957, Dr. Koprowska and her husband moved to Philadelphia and she began work at Hahnemann Medical College. Despite initial problems with department heads, she was eventually made a full professor in 1964, the first woman to hold such a position at Hahnemann Medical College, and director of the School of Cytotechnology.

In 1970, Dr. Koprowska was made director of the cytology lab at Temple University Hospital and a professor of pathology at Temple University Medical School. In 1987, she became professor emerita.

Dr. Koprowska is the mother of two sons, both doctors. She received “Woman Physician of the Year” from the Polish American Society in 1977 and received the Papanicolaou Award of the American School of Cytology in 1985.

Bibliography:

Koprowska, Irena. *A Woman Wanders Through Life and Science*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Lilienfeld, Abraham, M.D., M.P.H. "ACS-VA Cooperative Study for the Evaluation of Radiologic and Sputum Cytologic Screening in the Early Detection of Lung Cancer: A Preliminary Report," 1962, (Box 4, Folder 1).

National Library of Medicine. "Dr. Irena Grasberg Kowprowska," (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_187.html), accessed June 5, 2011.

Scope and Contents

The Irena Koprowska collection on American Cancer Society-Veterans Administration Lung Cancer Screening Study consists of correspondence, data sheets, supporting notes, and reports dating from 1958 to 1964. The collection also includes microscope slides and photographic prints of the microscope slides. The material focuses on the lung cancer screening study conducted from 1958 to 1964 by Dr. Irena Koprowska, in conjunction with Dr. George Papanicolaou’s laboratory at Cornell, where she worked before coming to Hahnemann Medical College. The two co-authored a case report of the earliest

diagnosis of lung cancer by a sputum smear. It was noted that study had only negative results, and it has been asserted that results were not valuable, in themselves, in the early diagnosis of lung cancer.

Data sheets and follow-up materials may contain sensitive personal and medical information. Please consult the archivist before requesting use of the material. Of particular value will be the microscope slides and photographic prints of the slides, as well as the final reports which include the findings of the study.

This collection will be valuable to researchers studying the history of cancer research and as well as early women researchers in medicine.

Administrative Information

Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

2011.06.15

Finding aid prepared by Michael Peters and Jonathan Helmke.

Sponsor

The processing of this collection was made possible through a training session "Archives for Non-Archivists" hosted by the Council on Library and Information Resources and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use. However, the Follow-up Forms and data sheets are restricted. Please contact the Archives for additional information.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

Processing Information note

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This collection is minimally processed to the folder level.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- American Cancer Society.
- Cornell University.

Form/Genre(s)

- Correspondence
- Reports
- Specimens

Personal Name(s)

- Koprowska, Irena, 1917-
- Papanicolaou, George N., 1883-1962

Subject(s)

- Cytology
- Diagnosis, Laboratory
- Lungs--Cancer
- Medicine
- Veterans
- Women in medicine

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1959 May 15.	1	1
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1960 March 18.	1	2
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1960 November 7.	1	3
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1961 September 6.	1	4
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1962 March 23.	1	5
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1962 December.	1	6
American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1963.	1	7

American Cancer Society (ACS) and Veterans Administration (VA) Coordinating Committee meeting, 1964 February 28-29.	1	8
Applications for grant and grant awards, 1959-1962.	1	9
Correlation cases, 1959-1963.	1	10
Correspondence, 1958-1959.	2	1
Correspondence, 1959-1961.	2	2
Correspondence, circa 1963 June 17-1964 July 16.	2	3
Cytologic patterns of developing Bronchogenic Carcinoma, circa 1958-1959.	2	4
Data, index cards (3x5), 1958-1963.		6
Data, references, circa 1955.	2	5
Data, worksheets, circa 1958-1963.	2	6

Data, worksheets and notes, circa 1958-1962.	2	7
Follow-up forms [Restricted], circa 1958-1961.	3	1-12
Koprowski, Hilary, newspaper article, 2000 November 6.	2	8
Lecture, Cytology and Lung Cancer, 1963 June 6.	2	9
Photographs with identification, 1958-1961.	6	1-3
Report, preliminary, 1960 July 1.	4	1
Report, final, preliminary draft - chapters 1-3, 1963 March 18.	4	2
Report, final, preliminary draft - chapters 4-6 and appendices, 1963 March 18.	4	3
Report, final, 2nd draft, 1964 February.	5	1
Report, final, errata, circa 1964 February.	5	2

Slides, microscope, undated.

6

Scope and Contents note

Slides and cases of special interest from Dr. Pap's Lab [label from container]

Slides, microscope: significant cases [California, Ohio, and Wisconsin], undated.

7

Slides, microscope: significant cases [Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Mississippi], undated.

7