PHM

William Augustus Hinton

William Augustus Hinton was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 15, 1883. After two years at the University of Kansas (1900–1902), he earned a Bachelor of Science from Harvard University in 1905. Lacking the funds for medical school, William Hinton taught at Walden University, Nashville Tennessee, and at Langston University in Oklahoma for four years. During the summer months, he continued his studies in bacteriology and physiology at the University of Chicago. William Hinton entered Harvard Medical School in 1909 and earned an M.D., with honors, in 1912, completing his degree in only three years. At Harvard Medical School, he won the competitive Wigglesworth Scholarship two years in a row and the coveted Hayden Scholarship in his last year. After graduation, Hinton worked at the Wasserman Laboratory of Harvard Medical School. In the mornings, he was a volunteer assistant in the Department of Pathology of the Massachusetts General Hospital. At the Wasserman Laboratory, Hinton began teaching serological techniques to medical students and graduate practitioners. Dr. Hinton served as Assistant Director of the Division of Biologic Laboratories and chief of the Wasserman Laboratory when it was transferred from Harvard to the Massachusetts Department of Health in 1915. In 1918, he was appointed as instructor in preventive medicine and hygiene at the Harvard Medical School, while continuing his work as chief of the Wasserman laboratory.

From 1921 to 1946, Hinton served as instructor in bacteriology and immunology at Harvard and as lecturer, until 1949 when he was promoted to the rank of clinical professor. Dr. William A. Hinton was the first African American to become a professor at Harvard Medical School, Hinton retired in 1950 to Canton, Massachusetts as a Professor Emeritus. Even after his retirement from Harvard, he taught there for some time (Source: Boston Daily Globe, September 15, 1952) and served until 1953 as physician-in-chief of the Department of Clinical Laboratories of the Boston Dispensary. He also taught at the Harvard School of Public Health, Tufts University Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine and for many years after 1919 was a lecturer at Simmons College, Boston. He was a special consultant to the U.S. Public Health Service and a consultant (1946-1949) at the Massachusetts Hospital School for Crippled Children, Canton.

Dr. Hinton is responsible for the Hinton test for syphilis, which was found to be as effective, and in some respects superior to the Wasserman test. Dr. Hinton was responsible for the discovery of the Davies-Hinton test of blood and spinal fluid.

> Expert on serology of syphilis and gonococcus infection in relation to public health. The test, named after Hinton, was used by the public Health Service in the United States as the best for determining the presence of syphilis, being extensively used in World War II by the Army. Dr. Hinton was an instructor of preventive medical hygiene, immunology, and bacteriology at Harvard Medical School. Pathologist and Director of Research at the Boston Dispensary. Head of Wasserman Laboratory at the State Health Department of Massachusetts.

Public Health Museum in Massachusetts
Protecting Public Health Past and Present
365 East Street, Tewksbury, MA 01876
Tel: 978-851-7321, Ext 2606
www.publichealthmuseum.org

Aside: Discussion of Hinton Blood Test

Dr. William Augustus Hinton's single contribution to medical science and practice was his research in syphilology. He published his first scientific paper on the serology of syphilis just two years after graduation from medical school in Rosenan Textbook of Preventative Medicine. During the 1920,'s Hinton developed and perfected his world-renowned serological test for syphilis. An accurate test for syphilis was vital because the Wasserman and other early blood serum tests often resulted in false diagnosis of the disease. The Hinton test is based on flocculation, which sharply reduced the percentage of false positive results. The test met the requirements of mass screening, quick results, simplicity, replicability, and unambiguity. In 1934, the U.S. Public Health Service reported that its evaluation of the most widely used test for syphilis showed that the Hinton test was the most effective, using sensitivity and specificity as evaluative standards. In 1936 Hinton has Syphilis and its Treatment (MacMillian) published.

Memberships:

- *National Medical Association*
- *American Society of Clinical Pathologists*
- *Society of American Bacteriologists*
- *American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)*
- *Fellow, Massachusetts Medical Society*
- *The Serology Laboratory at the State Laboratory Institute of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health was named for him, and in 2008, the entire laboratory was named the William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute.*
- *Would not accept the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP in 1938. (Dr. Hinton wanted his work to speak for his awards and not his race. He was concerned that his ability to be a productivity researcher would be inhibited if the profession knew he was black. DNB*
- *1948 – Elected a life member of the American Social Science Association, in recognition of his achievements as a "distinguished scientist, leading serologist and public health bacteriologist."*
- *Frequent lecturer to the constituent societies of the National Medical Association.*
- *Former student, Louis Tompkins Wright, also gained fame as a physician.*

Selected Publications

Syphilis and Its Treatment
(New York, NY: MacMillian), 1936 321p
Published as part of series: MacMillian Medical Monographs, G.R. Minot … editorial advisor OCLC: 2399620

The first medical textbook by a black American to be published. Dr. Hinton write in the preface, "syphilis is a needlessly common occurrence" and he sought to provide a "clear, simple, relatively complete account of syphilis and its treatment for physicians, public health workers, and medical students."