

## A Brief History of the Fleischner Society

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Dr Felix Fleischner was born in Vienna in 1893 and received his medical degree in 1919 from the University of Vienna. He was a member of the staff at the Wilhelminen Hospital until 1932, at which time he became Chief of Radiology at Vienna Children's Hospital. Before coming to the United States in 1938, he had already published 87 papers in the European journals. He spent his first 2 years in the United States at the Massachusetts General Hospital followed by 2 years in private practice. He was appointed to the staff at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital in 1942 as their first full time radiologist, becoming Chairman of the department in 1945 and serving in this position until 1960. In recognition of his brilliance, he was named as Harvard Medical School Professor in 1950. After his mandatory age-related "retirement," he served as a consultant to many Boston hospitals and an international lecturer. While in the United States, he published an additional 164 articles with resulting total publications of 251, mostly dealing with the pathogenesis and diagnosis of lung disease through the use of the chest radiograph.

In November 1969, a group of 8 radiologists including Doctors Robert Fraser, Leo Rigler, Benjamin Felson, George Simon, Norman Blank, Richard Greenspan, Eric Milne, and Morris Simon first met to form a new society to study chest disease primarily through the medium of chest roentgenology. Dr Fleischner had been invited to the meeting, but when he suddenly died of a heart attack while swimming in August, 3 months before the meeting, the group dedicated and named the new organization, the Fleischner Society.<sup>1,2</sup>

A mission statement included in its objectives to develop a better understanding of diseases of the chest, to foster chest radiology as an art and a science, and to stimulate all aspects of teaching and research. Perhaps the goal of the Society is best summarized in its bylaws: "... the Society would be a non profit educational, international society of physicians and scientists interested in the normal and diseased chest, who meet to cooperate in advancing knowledge in this field and to conduct teaching conferences with an emphasis on chest imaging for physicians and scientists."

To meet these goals, the membership would have to include many disciplines, such as adult and pediatric pulmonology, physiology, pathology, anesthesiology, and surgery, among other specialties. As many of these specialists were located abroad, it was decided that international representation was mandatory, and over the years there have been members from Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, England, France, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland. A decision was also made that membership would be by invitation only, and that a smaller organization, perhaps about 65 members, would foster greater exchange of unique perspectives, varied and probing, with more disciplined discussions, and that two-thirds of the members should represent the radiologic sciences.

In keeping with its mission, the Society initiated the annual Fleischner postgraduate course for individuals of all disciplines who were interested in chest disease. The courses were very well received and would alternate between the East and West Coasts of the United States and abroad including England, France, Greece, and Japan, among other venues. The courses were unique because of their extensive integration of radiologic principles with the science brought by its members who represented other fields. The Society has acted as a cosponsor of the World Congress of Thoracic Imaging, beginning with the first Congress, held in 2005 in Florence, Italy, and the second, held in 2009 in Valencia, Spain.

Following the postgraduate course, the Society had always held a private scientific meeting of several days' duration. Here, research in depth on the origins of chest disease could be discussed and dissected by the smaller group of Society members. Ideas have been forthcoming that encourage research in pulmonary disease in all aspects including chest roentgenology.

Members of the Society have contributed hundreds of papers on all aspects of chest disease, but one of the Society's greatest achievements has been the publication of a number of formal statements which have since been adopted as the standards for chest imaging<sup>3-9</sup> (Table 1).

The Fleischner Society is now 40 years young. With approximately 65 active members (and 35 less active senior members) of varying disciplines and its continued international orientation, the Society is in a very strong position to continue to fulfill its mission.

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**TABLE 1.** Selected Publications by Members of the Fleischner Society

Glossary of terms for thoracic radiology <sup>3</sup>	1984
Glossary critique and revisions <sup>4</sup>	1985
Glossary of terms for thoracic imaging <sup>5</sup>	2008
Glossary of terms for CT of the lungs <sup>6</sup>	1996
Radiation exposure at chest CT <sup>7</sup>	2003
Guidelines for management of small pulmonary nodules detected on CT scans <sup>8</sup>	2005
Management of suspected acute pulmonary embolism in the era of CT angiography <sup>9</sup>	2007

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