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[Columbia University. Department of Ophthalmology pathologic reports](#)

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY.

Department of Ophthalmology pathologic reports, 1928-1990.

13.5 cubic feet (129 volumes)

CUMC-0152

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE: Although ophthalmological instruction appears to have been offered at the College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S) on an occasional basis as early as the 1820s, the first professor of ophthalmology, Cornelius R. Agnew, was only appointed in 1867. A formal department emerged in the early twentieth century with an “Executive Officer” (chairman) first appearing in the 1915/16 P&S annual catalog.

A gift of \$5 million by philanthropist Edward S. Harkness led to the construction of a separate building for the department at the corner of 165th Street and Fort Washington Avenue in Manhattan which opened in January 1933. Though formally known as the Edward S. Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology, it is generally referred to as the Eye Institute.

In 1940, the Herman Knapp Memorial Hospital then located at 10th Avenue and 57th Street and founded in 1869 as the New York Ophthalmic and Aural Institute, merged with the department and its assets were used to support the Knapp Memorial Laboratory of Physiological Optics. A laboratory addition to the Eye Institute building was opened in 1970. The Eye Institute building was scheduled to be demolished in 2023.

SCOPE & CONTENT: Reports of pathological examinations done on patients of the Columbia University Department of Ophthalmology. There are 25,921 reports contained in 129 volumes dating from 1928 until 1990. Each report is usually no more than 1 or 2 pages and is typed. Pre-printed forms are not introduced until 1987 though all the reports follow a consistent format. Patient information is minimal consisting of name, age, and the name of their physician. The reports include a short history, the pathologist’s findings and a diagnosis. Letters to or from referring physicians and photographs are sometimes included but are more common in the earlier volumes.

ARRANGEMENT: Chronologically by date of report.

LANGUAGE: English.

ACCESS: Because the papers include Confidential Health Information (CHI) as defined by Columbia University policies governing data security and privacy, access is allowed only under the terms of Archives and Special Collections’ [Access Policy to Records Containing Confidential Health Information](#).

USE RESTRICTIONS: Columbia University does not hold the copyright for these records.

PROVENANCE: Transfer from the Department of Ophthalmology, 2023 (accession #2023.009).

CUSTODIAL HISTORY: Until their transfer to Archives & Special Collections, the reports were held by the John Wheeler Library in the department's home, the Edward S. Harkness Institute of Ophthalmology, generally called the Eye Institute.

CITE AS: Department of Ophthalmology Pathologic Reports, CUMC-0152, Archives and Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library.

Subjects (LC):

Columbia University. Department of Ophthalmology.
Edward S. Harkness Eye Institute.
Eye Institute – New York (State) – New York.
Eye – Diseases.
Ophthalmology – Practice – United States – 20th century.
Medical records.

MESH:

Eye Diseases – pathology.
Pathology, Clinical – Case Reports.

Genre terms:

Casebooks.
Medical records.