

## **NMHM Collections Standard Operating Procedure for Access and Use**

### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The objects and specimens comprising the collections of the NMHM are available for research, exhibition, publication and other educational purposes.

1.2 This SOP exists to:

- Preserve the collections for future use,
- Allow legitimate scientific and historical research of collections materials, and
- Enhance the scientific and historical value of the collection for the public and professionals.

### **2.0 Description**

2.1 Material objects, archival documents, and biological specimens of the NMHM Collections are preserved in order to promote the understanding of medicine – past, present, and future – with a special emphasis on tri-service American military medicine. Research and educational use enhances the value of the collections, and is therefore strongly encouraged.

2.2 Concurrently, the NMHM maintains an obligation to maximize the value of each object in its holdings for future use. This applies not only to the data associated with each artifact, document, and specimen, but also to the physical and chemical integrity of the desired materials. Thus, it is critical that the demands placed upon the specimens for current research and educational uses are balanced with the need to preserve the specimens for future uses.

### **3.0 Personal Data Protection**

3.1 Many of the NMHM collections maintain records with personally identifiable data. In accordance with standard practice, archival records are closed for 75 years from the date of creation in order to protect the privacy of the donor or of third parties. Requests to see portions of restricted collections will be considered, but the decision to allow access to any portion of such a collection will be based on privacy considerations and the ability of the archives to make it available. All such decisions are at the sole discretion of the Otis Historical Archives.

3.2 Military records of individuals who left service less than 75 years ago (or 62 years, if the date of separation is known) are closed to the public. Complete records can only be released to the collection's donor/creator, military veteran, or the legal next-of-kin of the veteran. The museum will release otherwise unrestricted access to military records 62 years after an individual's date of separation, including individuals who are completely discharged (with no remaining reserve commitment), or who are retired or have died. This includes any medical records that may be included in those records. When the individual's date of separation is not known, the personnel record is restricted for 75 years from the date of the record's creation.

3.3 Individual collections or records may be closed for other reasons. Given the highly sensitive nature of some of the material in the NMHM, decisions about the release of medical records will be made on a case by case basis. The NMHM Collecting Divisions reserves the right to refuse a request for information if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the request would endanger the collection material or involve a violation of privacy.

3.4 Research notes made using restricted collections may be subject to review.

#### **4.0 Access to Collections**

4.1 The collections are open for research from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Access to the collections is by appointment only. Extended hours may be permitted but must be approved by the appropriate collections personnel prior to you visit.

4.2 The museum address is 2500 Linden Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Visiting researchers must enter the museum through the designated Forest Glen Annex entrances at the Brookville Avenue or Linden Lane gates. Access to the collections cannot be attained by entering the museum's visitor entrance.

- Upon entering the base, researchers should be prepared to show valid state or federal identification (such as a driver's license).
- You may be subject to a random vehicle search, which includes exiting the vehicle and producing car registration.
- Some taxicab companies will refuse to enter a military base so it is best to ask the company beforehand.
- The base has a 15MPH speed limit and it is strictly enforced.
- Parking is available behind the museum in the area designated for museum staff.

4.3 Projects must be specific and visitors' access is limited to the material they initially requested. Casual browsing and additional impromptu requests cannot be accommodated.

4.4 To provide the greatest amount of service in the time available it may be necessary to restrict the amount of time for each visitor, limit repeat visits by the same individual, or restrict visitor's use of photographs and other records.

4.5 Photographs, photocopies, and scans of objects and specimens may be performed with prior approval from the Museum and under the supervision of the attending NMHM staff. The NMHM Collections Division reserves the right to limit recording objects if they are judged to be too fragile whereby handling may cause damage.

4.6 Certain collection types of the NMHM present a chemical hazard, such as fluid-preserved soft tissues, and as such the use of these specimens for research is more restricted. Access to the storage areas containing fluid-preserved specimens is controlled and follows the Controlled Access Policy for Wet Tissue Storage Room. This policy is designed to protect the health and safety of staff and researchers. Researchers may be allowed access to the wet tissue storage room under the guidelines of this policy. Collections staff will remove specimens from the storage room to the

collections area for research.

4.7 As a general rule, the NMHM does not support destructive sampling/testing of its holdings.

## **5.0 Research Request Procedures**

### 5.1 On-site Research

5.1.1 The NMHM requires that researchers speak with collections staff about their specific research needs before arriving at the museum. Individual divisions may provide additional insight to the collections as well as additional requirements depending on the nature of the request. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the researcher contact the most appropriate collections division prior to arranging a visit via [USArmy.Detrick.MEDCOM-USAMRMC.List.Medical-Museum@health.mil](mailto:USArmy.Detrick.MEDCOM-USAMRMC.List.Medical-Museum@health.mil).

5.1.2 All researchers wishing to conduct work at the museum must submit a formal request for access. This request must include a completed NMHM Research Request Form (Annex A: NMHM Collections Access Request) and a written proposal generated by the requestor on his or her institute letterhead. The proposal must describe:

- the extent and nature of the research,
- specimens or collections required,
- the types of observations or documentation that will be collected,
- equipment required,
- the proposed length of the visit with proposed dates, and
- anticipated publication, presentation or dissemination of research products.

5.1.3 Non-US citizens must include in their request a copy of their valid passport and visa, if appropriate. Ensure requisite documentation is submitted no later than 45 days prior to the desired start date.

5.1.4 Research requests will be assessed on the basis of both the scientific/historical merit and the appropriate ethical treatment of the specimen(s) or collection.

### 5.2 Off-site Research Requests

5.2.1 Individuals interested in non-self service activities, or requests for information may submit such a request to any of the collecting divisions via email or telephone.

5.2.2 These requests will be addressed as time permits, and depending on the request NMHM Staff may direct the requestor to submit a formal research request (see Section 5.1, above).

5.2.3 Services for off-site requests are limited to reprint and photo searches; digital and print copies of images from the collections; and copies of reprints in electronic or print form. Fees for non-self service prints and copies may apply.

## **6.0 Research Procedures**

6.1 A collections staff member will locate, transport, and return objects/materials to their proper location. Collections staff will pull one item for viewing at a time, unless directed otherwise by the relevant collections manager.

6.2 Handling museum items will be done over the most appropriate surface determined by the coordinating collection manager.

6.3 Research will be conducted under the supervision of Collections Staff. Collections Manager will determine the level of supervision of the researcher. Researchers are expected to notify a collections staff member if an object or any part of an object becomes damaged during the course of research.

6.4 Protective impermeable gloves must be used when examining fluid-preserved specimens and cloth gloves may be required when handling objects and paper documents in order to protect the objects.

6.5 Access and handling of fluid-preserved specimens will be done with collections staff present or with their concurrence.

6.6 Food, drink or gum is not allowed in the collections areas.

6.7 Photographs, photocopies, and scans of objects and specimens may be performed with prior approval from the Museum and under the supervision of the attending NMHM staff. Designated areas may be available for researcher use.

6.8 Available resources for researchers include the following:

- Open table workspace
- Xerox copy machine
- Compound microscopes and stereoscopes linked with PC workstations equipped with Image Pro-Plus software, and digital camera body attachment

6.9 Visiting researchers may bring personal laptops, flat-bed scanners and cameras. However, the make, model and serial numbers for all electronic equipment must be provided to the museum prior to the visit. Furthermore, all wireless connectivity must be deactivated while on NMHM premises.

## **7.0 Publication Procedures**

7.1 The majority of materials, data, and images in the NMHM Collections are in the public domain and are therefore not subject to copyright restrictions. The museum makes material available to patrons under the protection of fair use, but requires the researcher to obtain proper permission from the museum for use, which is achieved by submitting the required documents outlined in Section 5.0, above.

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7.2 For material that is not in the public domain, it is the patron's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in the NMHM Collections. Material not in the public domain, and used beyond the parameters of fair use, requires the written permission of the copyright holder.

7.3 Photographs and scans taken for publication will include a credit line/acknowledgment noting the object/specimen/document/image number and the NMHM. A sample acknowledgment may include "Image courtesy of the National Museum of Health and Medicine, Silver Spring, MD."

7.4 The NMHM requests a copy of all publications resulting from study conducted using the collections of the NMHM.