

It's deeply meaningful to us that you would choose to host such an important event here at the Countway. And we've had the honor of working with Michael Christ, and with many of you, for many years. As some of you know, the Countway's Center for the History of Medicine is one of the largest and most utilized history of medicine special collections in the world. We received nearly 3000 remote research requests last year, and much of our usage revolves around our manuscript collections. We steward the behind-the-scenes collections – research notes, correspondence - of faculty ranging from Joseph Murray – who would receive the Nobel Prize for the development of kidney transplantation – to Mary Ellen Avery – who discovered surfactant as a cure for fetal pulmonary distress syndrome – to psychiatrist Charles Pierce, who coined the very term microaggression in the 1970s. But we're also proud to steward the holdings of organizations like IPPNW, offering a window into the history of medicine, public health, society, and the interfaces among them.

For historians of medicine, IPPNW is not only a remarkable activist organization, but a fascinating case study of the power of medicalization. From the 1970s onward, scholars like Peter Conrad have discussed this process of “medicalization,” whereby seeming social issues are brought within the domain of medical authority. This can be a pernicious process, through, say pharmaceuticalization, whereby social issues are suddenly pathologized and turned into conditions that apparently require medications.

But Physicians for Social Responsibility and then IPPNW, did something very different. Starting during what many consider the golden age of medicine and medical authority in the 1960s, and addressing the seeming political and military issue of nuclear war, they leveraged their medical authority, first in the pages of *NEJM*, and then far beyond, to demonstrate the untenability of a “medical” *response* to nuclear war. The only remedy was prevention, meaning disarmament - as they demonstrated through hard analysis and colorful and medically inflected posters alike. And over the ensuing decades, they – meaning, many of you in this room – engaged with journal editors, those in congress, and eventually, colleagues across the Iron Curtain and around the world to mobilize against nuclear proliferation. They had, in effect, medicalized nuclear war and thereby legitimated a preventive approach against it, and IPPNW would of course earn the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, followed by the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

In 2023, as you all know and have eloquently and forcefully communicated, it is clear that the need for this campaign initiated over 60 years ago is far from over. Yet PSR, IPPNW, and ICAN continue to provide a moral and pragmatic blueprint for activists attempting to leverage medical authority to promote change – not only for those combating nuclear war, but for those combating climate change, gun violence, structural racism, and a host of other critical issues.

We're proud at the Countway to play our own small role here, to steward not only IPPNW's large collection, but those of individual PSR and IPPNW-affiliated or closely connected members like (in alphabetical order) Eric Chivian, Lachlan Forrow, Sanford Gifford, Howard Hiatt, Alexander Leaf, Jennifer Leaning, Bernard Lown, Jim Muller, and Victor Sidel. And scholars use these, ranging from my own former Harvard undergraduate student, and now HMS student, Katie Blanton, who wrote her Hoopes Award-winning undergraduate thesis on PSR and IPPNW, to historians from around the world working on the history and strategies of medical activism.

In short, we're enormously grateful to all of you for your inspiring work over many decades. And we're honored to steward such remarkable collections and to enable the history of PSR, IPPNW and their members to continue to inform contemporary medicine, public health, and society alike.