

**MEDICAL CENTER ARCHIVES
OF
NEWYORK-PRESBYTERIAN/WEILL CORNELL**

**1300 York Avenue # 34
New York, NY 10065**

**Finding Aid To
THE CRASH INJURY RESEARCH PROJECT COLLECTION**

**Dates of Records:
1942-1960**

**5 Linear Inches
(1 Box)**

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HIPAA restrictions updated by Rebecca Snyder in 2020**

Preface

The following history of the Crash Injury Research (CIR) Project at Cornell University Medical College was derived from the material contained in this collection and also in the Hugh DeHaven Papers. Because it deals with the CIR Project only during its Cornell Medical College years, the information on the aviation branch of the program really ends in 1954-1955, when that division moved to the Cornell-Guggenheim Aviation Safety Research Center facilities on Park Avenue. The automotive branch of CIR stayed at Cornell University Medical College until around 1960 when a closer working arrangement was sought with Cornell Aeronautical Laboratories in Buffalo. More material relating to the CIR may be found in the Cornell University Archives in Ithaca.

Background

The CIR Project was begun at Cornell University Medical College in March 1942. This Project was the brainchild of Mr. Hugh DeHaven, whose interest in crash survivability had started in 1917 when he was involved in a mid-air collision, of which he was the only survivor. He came to believe that many crash injuries were tied closely to the design of the plane and could, with careful engineering, be substantially reduced. In 1937 Dr. DeHaven embarked on a series of studies on freefalls to analyze the body's ability to withstand impact. He proved that the body was far stronger than had been imagined. In 1942 he convinced Dr. Eugene DuBois, Chairman, and the members of the National Research Council's Committee on Aviation Medicine, that the survivability rate of air accidents could be greatly increased if safety engineering research was done involving the recording and collection of data on crashes, with analyses made from the data that could be implemented in future plane designs for greater safety. Funding was obtained from the National Research Council and also from the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) of the Federal Government. The Project was housed in the Department of Physiology at Cornell University Medical College, of which Dr. DuBois was Chairman. Dr. Joseph Hinsey, Dean of the Medical College at the time, was the Responsible Investigator for the Project.

The Project's work received a great deal of attention from the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) and the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) and the Project's recommendations and safety devices were in many instances adopted by airplane builders. During World War II, the CIR people worked closely with the government and opened two branch offices in Washington. These were discontinued as a part of CIR at the end of the War when funding from the OSRD was cut off.

In 1951, the CIR Project began to aid the Indiana State Police in their studies of automotive accidents. They devised forms for data collection (as they had done in the aviation field), and offered to help analyze the data. In March 1953, a separate Automotive CIR (ACIR) was set up under the Directorship of John Moore.

When the separate automotive branch was formed, the aviation studies (now termed AvCIR) were placed under the control of the Office of the Vice-President for Research at Cornell University. In December 1954 Hugh DeHaven retired and A. Howard Hasbrook took over AvCIR. Funds were obtained from Cornell-Ithaca and also from the Office of Naval Research (ONR). At this time the aviation part of Crash Injury Research moved away from the Medical College, organizationally and also physically. They moved first to the Cornell-Guggenheim Aviation Safety Research Center. This had been the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Aviation Safety Center at Cornell University, although it was based on Park Avenue in New York City. With the great growth in the automotive area of Crash Injury, it was felt that a research facility with total emphasis on aviation studies would be better for the AvCIR group, while their departure would leave more room for the Automotive people. Cornell-Guggenheim had worked closely with AvCIR for years and was just one example of the many organizations that sprang up on the CIR Cornell model in the late 1940's and '50's.

By 1955, when AvCIR moved from Cornell-Guggenheim to a new base at LaGuardia Airport, the Medical College was only minimally involved. The Project was run through Cornell-Ithaca, which had control of budgets, fundraising efforts, etc.. In 1957 the Aviation studies moved to Phoenix, Arizona and then became a formal division of the Flight Safety Foundation, Inc.. This group had been formed in 1945 by Major Crane and David Morrison, both of whom were involved with the Washington branches of Crash Injury during the War. The Flight Safety Foundation was taken over in 1968 by a company called Dynamic Science of Marshall Industries. In 1972 this company was sold to Ultrasystems, Inc.

Automotive Crash Injury Research, with John Moore as Director, remained at Cornell University Medical College under the Department of Public Health. During 1957 and 1958 there developed a split in the workings of the Project. John Moore sought financial support from various car manufacturers so ACIR could continue the accumulation and correlation of automobile crash data. A separate section, under Dr. James McCarroll and championed by Dr. Walsh McDermott, Chairman of the Dept. of Public Health, appeared with an emphasis more strongly placed on trauma and pedestrian injury. Dr. McCarroll and Dr. McDermott felt that no industry support should be accepted for this program.

The records do not reveal the result of this split, nor the future course of Crash Injury Research at Cornell Medical College after 1960, but it seems that the group under Dr. McCarroll remained as a part of the Dept. of Public Health, while John Moore and the CIR Program became more of a direct Cornell-Ithaca run organization. In 1960, a new Director of ACIR was appointed, Robert A. Wolf, and a closer working relationship with Cornell Aeronautical Laboratories (CAL) was sought.

Scope and Content

This file on the Crash Injury Research Project shows the daily workings of the Project during its Cornell Medical College years, ie. 1942-1955 for AvCIR and 1953-1960 for ACIR. The papers deal with budgets, fundraising, staffing and the reports that resulted from the many studies that were done. The work of the Washington branches of AvCIR is shown in the correspondence from 1945 and also in the Monthly Reports. These groups did aviation research for the government and their projects included a helicopter safety study. The men who worked in these offices were, among others: David Morrison, Major Crane (as noted above) and Mr. Moon.

This collection is rather limited in its scope. It provides a glimpse of the Project and how it fit into the Medical College, but it only comes to life when used in conjunction with the Hugh DeHaven Papers, also in the Medical Archives, New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. The five conferences on CIR that Dr. DuBois organized are not discussed in the CIR files, but in the DeHaven papers. Also, the important role of Hugh DeHaven himself is, of course, better documented in his own papers.

Non-Manuscript Materials

For photographs dealing with the CIR Project, see the Hugh DeHaven Personal Photograph Collection, which are included in the digital photo catalog.

Subjects

Annual Reports (CIR)	Physiology, CUMC
DuBois, Eugene	Projects, Special (list)
Environmental Safety	Public Health
Fundraising	Wartime Activity
Hinsey, Joseph	
McDermott, Walsh	
Minutes	

Container List

- f.1 Correspondence, reprints, budgets, fundraising, etc., 1955-1960.
- f.2 Correspondence, reprints, budgets, minutes and agendas, 1951-1954.
- f.3 Correspondence, reports, minutes re: funding, staffing, patents, 1945-1949.
- f.4 Flight Safety Foundation, Origins, 1944-1945.
- f.5 Informative Accident Releases, # 4,6,7,13 and 12 Feb. 1947 (1947-1951).
- f.6 **Navy Safety Reports, 1945-1946. (Restricted – HIPAA)**

- f.7 Reports, Monthly, Progress and Annual, 1948-1952. (See also "Studies" section of Hugh DeHaven)
- f.8 Reprints, Hugh DeHaven, 1942, 1952.