

Editorial

Stamps in cardiology

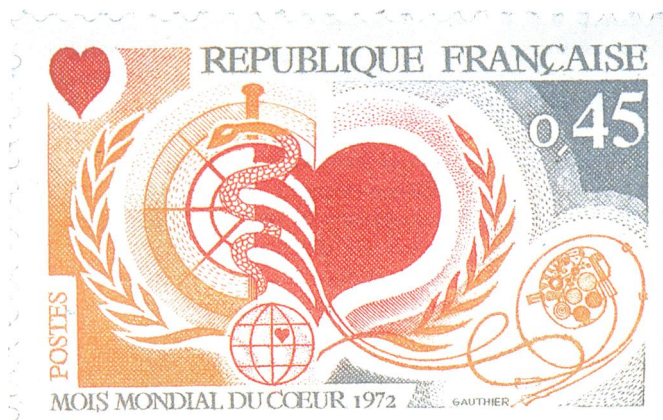
In future months *Heart* will publish an occasional series featuring postage stamps that commemorate famous cardiological personalities. The world's first adhesive postage stamp (the Penny Black) was issued by Great Britain in 1840. Since then many thousands of different stamps have been issued by all countries in the world to pay for their postal services. Initially the designs of the stamps were simple and in single colours but as engraving and printing techniques advanced so did the quality and features in the stamps. And the numbers and frequency of different issues increased.

Stamps are essentially of two types. Definitive issues are stamps that are in everyday use and on sale for a long time. There are usually many different values in the issue—to meet all the different postage needs and postal rates—and the designs are usually only changed after several years. The second type of stamp is the commemorative issue, which is designed to mark significant events, important anniversaries, or particular personalities. These are usually issued as single stamps or short sets and are available on sale for postal use for only a few months. They are usually issued on a particular day or time of the year relevant to the theme portrayed by the stamp. Often the event, anniversary, or personality featured is associated with one country in particular but other anniversaries such as the Centenary of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (1963) are international and many countries issue stamps simultaneously to celebrate the event.

Stamps with a medical theme occasionally appear within a definitive issue but more usually they appear as commemoratives. Despite the thousands of different commemorative issues that have been produced over the past 100 years or so, few relate to medicine and even fewer feature cardiology. Cardiological personalities are almost exclusively seen on stamps issued by their own country or the country where they carried out their major work. But there are notable exceptions that can be traced in the background to the stamp's history or the personality involved.

Nowadays stamps have more than just a role in raising revenue for the postal service. Because the stamp and cancellation mark are readily seen on the envelope they provide a considerable and highly effective advertising medium which has been exploited in the medical field,

particularly to promote health awareness and health education. A good example of this is World Health Day (7 April) which commemorates the foundation of the World Health Organisation in 1948. Each year on this day several countries issue stamps promoting and advertising particular WHO health campaigns. In 1962 the theme was "The world united against malaria" and in 1975 "Smallpox: point of no return". Stamps of a cardiac nature have appeared four times in these issues. In



45c stamp issued by France in April 1972 for the World Health Day/World Heart Month and featuring the heart, a pacemaker, and the World Health Organisation emblem.

1972 the World Health Day theme was "Your heart is your health", in 1978 "Down with high blood pressure", in 1980 "Smoking or health, the choice is yours" and in 1992 "Heart beat: the rhythm of health". The cancellation marks in different countries have also been used to convey medical messages including those about organ and blood donation and anti-smoking campaigns.

Stamps with a cardiac interest have also appeared occasionally to commemorate national heart foundations and other charitable organisations, cardiac institutions, and international cardiological or cardiac surgical congresses.

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