



**Guest Presenter**  
**Stanley Finger, Ph.D.**

**Benjamin Franklin and  
Medical Electricity**

**March 6, 2012**

## **Benjamin Franklin and Medical Electricity**

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1780), American statesman, writer, and scientist, was deeply involved with medicine throughout his long life. One of the questions that most interested him was whether electricity might have medical utility. He was one of the first scientists to conduct electrical experiments on people with strokes and other disorders to see if he could restore normal movement, sensation, and the like. He soon recognized that medical electricity was not the panacea it was hoped to be, but found that it could treat hysteria. He also gave others reasons to believe that shocks to the head might work for melancholia, an idea that resulted in successful clinical trials late in the 1700s. These and other aspects of Franklin's often overlooked forays into electrical medicine will be the subject of this talk.

Stanley Finger, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, in the Department of Psychology. He received his doctorate in biopsychology from Indiana University at Bloomington. Dr. Finger's distinguished career is replete with journal articles, book chapters, presentations, radio and television appearances and honors. He is a recipient of the Carlson Award from Cornell University Medical College, Rossi Award from University of Pavia and other prestigious awards for his contribution to the history and philosophy of the neurosciences. Dr. Finger became the founding member of the International Society of the History of Neurosciences, and has been the senior editor of the society's journal since 1996. A sample of his recent books includes: *Doctor Franklin's Medicine* (2006), *History of Neurology*, *Handbook of Clinical Neurology* (2010), *Minds Behind the Brain: A History of the Pioneers and their Discoveries* (2000, Ranked #1 in Physiology by North American Libraries), *Origins of Neuroscience: A History of Explorations into Brain Function* (1994, honorable mention from Association of American Publishers for Best Professional/Scholarly Publication).

**Chancellor's Dining Room, Health Professions Division**

**12:00 to 1:00 P.M. Lunch will be provided.**

Faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students interested in medicine, history, neurosciences, psychology, and the life of Benjamin Franklin are invited to attend this presentation. For catering considerations, **those wishing to attend must RSVP.**

**Contact Kathleen Hagen at x2-1235 or [khagen@nova.edu](mailto:khagen@nova.edu)**

**no later than 10:00 a.m. March 2.**