Headline: Inventions at Mayo Clinic: Changes that shaped the medical world started here

Many of the current medical practices that we consider universal today started right here at Mayo Clinic. From standardizing medical records to creating circular nurse stations to winning the Nobel Prize, the history at Mayo Clinic is full of pioneering medical practices that have shaped the medical world as we know it.

Both of the Mayo brothers had a passion and an appreciation for learning which they inherited from their father, Dr. William W. Mayo. Dr. William demonstrated his commitment to gaining new techniques and medical knowledge by traveling around the world learning from different physicians. The desire to collaborate and learn from one another is part of the reason why Mayo established the first group medical practice, bringing in other doctors to work together to bring the best possible care to patients. Dr. William W. Mayo set the preset for this type of medicine with his philosophy: "No one is big enough to be independent of others," and thus Mayo Clinic was founded with the idea that the wisdom and knowledge of many people combined was better than any one person.

Through the group practice concept, a physician by the name of Dr. Henry Plummer was brought in as a partner to Mayo Clinic. At the beginning of the 20th century, one of Dr. Plummer’s ideas would change the medical world: the creation of a centralized medical record. Before this change, when a patient came in a physician would make notes in a ledger book, and this book needed to be relocated for each visit. Making the situation even more complex a patient could have multiple entries in multiple ledger books meaning the information one was looking for could be almost anywhere. This system changed in 1907 with Dr. Plummer’s idea to create a single file for each patient that had all of their information including clinic visits, medical history, and laboratory tests. Files would travel with patients and be stored in a central repository. Mayo’s repository of medical records is one of the most comprehensive and vast in the entire world and is even the source for over 1,500 medical studies. Dr. Plummer’s system was the basis for the one still used today by Mayo Clinic and other hospitals worldwide.
Other advancements in the early twentieth century include the system for grading cancerous tumors, first developed by Dr. Albert Broders of the Mayo pathology staff. Dr. Broders published a series of four papers in which he categorized cancer malignancy by number. The most malignant cancers were put in category 4, and the least malignant cancers were designated as category 1. His study of 537 cases began an index of cancer malignancy that has been adopted by hospitals worldwide.

Mayo is famous for many other innovations such as the first total hip replacement surgery, defining basal metabolic rate, creating circular nurses stations, and a Mayo physician winning the Nobel Prize for his research on cortisol. Mayo Clinic has a long history of being at the forefront of innovative patient care; a tradition that still continues today.