“The scenes preceding lectures were often boisterous, and ‘passing up’ students was not infrequent. This consisted in seizing some unsuspecting student and passing him along in the arms of his fellow-student until he was thrown upon the floor in the upper row of seats in the amphitheater.” Henry M. Hurd ’63, ’66m (Michigan Alumnus, February, 1902, p. 220)

“I went over to the medical college and saw an operation performed upon a boy’s leg. His leg was opened below the knee for near a foot & with hammer & chisel the surgeon went to work to extract a piece of dead bone. It looked barbarous and the patient was under the influence of chloroform and the operation lasted for more than half an hour.” George Beck ’60m (Michigan Alumnus, 3/24/1926, p. 492)

“The amphitheater became a place of resort on surgical clinic days for literary students who wished to test their nerves, and many ludicrous incidents of heart failure on the part of these amateurs were current gossip. I remember on one occasion a literary student dropped with a dull thud at the very commencement of a surgical clinic, before even the patient had been brought in or any preparation had been made.” Henry M. Hurd ’63, ’66m (Michigan Alumnus, February, 1902, p. 220)
Since opening its doors in 1850, the Medical School has been a leader in medical education, patient care, and biomedical research. In addition to its professional Doctor of Medicine program, the Medical School offers Master’s and Ph.D. degrees in the basic medical sciences. The School established the nation’s first university-owned and operated teaching hospital and created the first departments of pharmacology and human genetics in the United States. It also played an important role in creating the science-based medical curriculum adopted by most universities in the 20th century. The Medical School was among the first major American medical schools to graduate women and African Americans. Today there are more practicing medical doctors from the University of Michigan than from any other medical school in the United States.
The Department of Medicine was also one of those academic units specified in the 1837 act establishing the University of Michigan as a state university, but it was not organized until 1849, and it opened for its first students in 1850. Five professors formed the first faculty in Medicine:

Moses Gunn graduated from Geneva Medical College in 1846. He came to Ann Arbor and opened a medical practice, also organizing classes in Anatomy. In 1850 he accepted the professorship of Anatomy in the new Department of Medicine and Surgery. In 1854 the chair was divided. Gunn chose Surgery and his mentor Dr. Corydon Ford came to Michigan to accept the chair of Anatomy. In 1867 Dr. Gunn resigned to accept the chair of Surgery in Rush Medical College.

Samuel Denton was Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine and of Pathology from 1850 until his death in 1860. Dr. Denton was one of the first Regents appointed by the governor in 1837. He also represented Washtenaw County in the State Senate.

Silas Douglas was Professor of Chemistry, Pharmacy, and Medical Jurisprudence. In 1838 Douglas began the study of medicine in the office of Dr. Zina Pitcher in Detroit. He accompanied Douglas Houghton on his geological surveys of Michigan and was also a physician for the Government. He came to Ann Arbor in 1843 to practice medicine. In 1844 he was appointed assistant to Professor Houghton and had charge of the work in Chemistry during Houghton’s absence. He was actively involved in establishing the Medical Department and organizing the Chemical Laboratory.

In 1837 Abram Sager was in charge of the Botanical and Zoological Department of the Michigan Geological Survey. He served the University of Michigan as Professor of Botany and Zoology from 1842 to 1850; Obstetrics, Diseases of Women and Children, Botany, and Zoology from 1850 to 1854; Obstetrics and Physiology from 1855 to 1860, and Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children from 1860 to 1875. He served as Dean of the Medical Faculty for several years.

J. Adams Allen was Professor of Therapeutics, Materia Medica, and Physiology.

“There were no very stringent regulations existing governing the admission of a student to the department of medicine beyond a proper knowledge of English, such knowledge of the Latin language as will enable one to read current prescriptions, and a certificate of good moral character. The medical student also at the most came only for two courses of lectures of about six months each and did not become identified with the life of the University.” Henry M. Hurd ’63m (Michigan Alumnus, February, 1902, p. 219)

“The students attended four lectures each morning during five days in the week, the afternoons being devoted to laboratory work and dissection. On Saturdays the students read their theses.” Victor C. Vaughan ’78m (Michigan Alumnus, April, 1900, p. 279)
Because of the rapid growth of the Medical Department, in 1864 an addition to the Medical Building became necessary. The cost of the addition was $20,000, half of which was raised by a general tax on the citizens of Ann Arbor. The four-story structure at the west of the original building held offices and two large lecture rooms or amphitheaters. The top floor provided a new and enlarged dissecting room.

The practice of utilizing hospitals as centers of clinical training was well advanced in Europe during the 19th century, especially in Germany and France. It developed slowly in this country. Although the desirability of actual bedside experience for the young physician was recognized, it was difficult to obtain such instruction except under the supervision of a preceptor—an actual practitioner with whom the young doctor served an apprenticeship as assistant. Patients began to come to the University medical faculty for treatment. In 1868 the faculty reported that even though there were no hospital facilities available, over three hundred patients had come to the University for consultation and help.

In 1868 Dr. Alonzo Benjamin Palmer, Professor of the Theory and Practice of Internal Medicine, headed a movement in the American Medical Association to obtain more clinical instruction in American medical schools. As a result of his efforts as well as of the increasing community demand in Ann Arbor for a hospital, the faculty asked to be allowed to establish a hospital.

In 1869 the east Professors’ House on North University became the first University Hospital. It was a receiving home with twenty beds, but no operating or dressing rooms. Since the clinical and surgery demonstrations were held in the Medical Building, the students would transport the patients across the campus to the Medical Building and back to the little hospital.

“This makeshift hospital however was a significant beginning as it represented a most important landmark in the history of American medicine—the first instance of a university owning and controlling a hospital in connection with its own medical school.” Victor Vaughan ’78m (Michigan Alumnus, April, 1900, p. 279)
The original hospital, although inadequate, served its purpose by demonstrating that such an addition to the facilities of the school was both desirable and practicable. Efforts to secure a legislative appropriation for a larger hospital resulted in 1875 in a grant of $8,000 for an enlarged University Hospital, contingent upon a contribution of $4,000 from the city of Ann Arbor. The Pavilion Hospital consisted of two frame pavilions, which extended from the rear of the original hospital. It was poorly ventilated and originally without an operating room. It was typical of the era and was, in fact, designed to last only five years and built so that it could be burned down if there was an infectious disease outbreak. It provided sixty beds, but in 1878 one-fifth of the beds were assigned to patients of the newly created homeopathic department.

At first the Hospital was open only six months of the year. In 1877 the legislature provided support permitting full-time operation. It was, however, closed for many summer periods during the succeeding two decades. In 1897 summer operation was made the condition of continuing legislative support for the Hospital.

In 1879 funds were granted for further expansion, as well as a new operating amphitheater, dining room and kitchen in connection with the matrons’ home. In 1881 an eye and ear ward was added, the first special ward to be erected as a separate building. The resident physicians, matrons, and private rooms for very sick patients occupied the original Hospital.
As early as 1848 the practitioners and patrons of homeopathy in Michigan were petitioning the legislature and the University to include homeopathic instruction in the curriculum of their state institution. The heated controversy continued until 1875 when the Homeopathic Medical College was established with two chairs. Samuel Arthur Jones (M.D. Missouri Homeopathic Medical College 1860, M.D. Homeopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania 1861) of Englewood, New Jersey was chosen to teach materia medica and therapeutics. John Coleman Morgan (M.D. Pennsylvania Medical College 1852) was selected for theory and practice, and served for two years. The students received instruction in the Medical and Surgery Department in all work except that included under the two homeopathic chairs.

Samuel Jones accepted the assignment to organize the Homeopathic Medical College, serving as Dean and Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics. He resigned in 1880 to practice in Ann Arbor and became an important figure in the life of the city. In addition to his professional ability, he was a scholar recognized for his knowledge of the literature of Thoreau and Carlyle.

In 1877 the College of Dental Surgery moved to the east Professors' House on South University. In 1879 a Homeopathic Hospital was built onto the rear of the Homeopathic Medical College building.
Pavilion Hospital (left) Homeopathic Hospital (right)
North University Avenue
By the late 1880s a new hospital became a critical need for the University of Michigan. The medical course had been lengthened to four years, the requirements for graduation had increased, and additional clinical courses were added. In 1889 the legislature appropriated $50,000 for a new hospital unit to consist of two buildings, one for the Homeopathic Medical College, and one for the Allopathic Medical Department. The city of Ann Arbor also contributed $25,000. The two buildings provided 104 beds, forty for the Homeopathic College and sixty-four for the Medical Department. The Hospitals opened in 1891.

The buildings had two wards as well as a few private rooms. The demand in the hospitals soon became so great that extra beds had to be provided. An amphitheater was included in the Hospital as “a small pit from the center of which arose a steep central aisle with rows of uncomfortable wooden benches on either side.” Operations and demonstrations were carried on before the students.
In 1899, the city of Ann Arbor gave to the University the property known as the Smith place for a hospital for the Homeopathic Medical Department. The building, completed in 1900, had one hundred and forty beds. The floor plan was in a “T” form. Each end of the top of the letter were wards, and the base was occupied by the operating and clinic rooms. The building contained six wards and about twenty private rooms. It extended back over the brow of a hill, which made possible a basement and a subbasement, above ground level. It was constructed of granite and gray pressed brick, with a red tile roof.

“\nThe broad corridors, wide windows and glistening red oak woodwork make an attractive interior. At the end of each hallway are double glass doors opening into a ward, each intended for sixteen beds. At the front of each ward is a large sun parlor, to be used as a sitting room by patients able to leave their beds. Admirable forethought has taken care that there be no square corners or angles to catch dust and germs. The plumbing attracts instant attention. It is elaborate and thoroughly modern. The Sturtevant heating system is guaranteed to change the air in the entire building every five minutes. The steam for the heating is carried from the University heating plant, a quarter of a mile distance. The operating rooms are up to date in every respect. The surgical amphitheater is finished in gray marble and is a model of beauty and utility. The site is particularly well adapted to the purpose. It is directly across the street from the University grounds and is on the street car line. The five acres of land and fine residence make up the grounds and house of what for generations has been one of the finest estates in the city. The Hospital was housed in this building until the Homeopathic Medical College was discontinued in 1922. In May, 1926, after the new University Hospital was opened, the Homeopathic Hospital was designated as South Department Hospital. The old hospital group of buildings on Catherine Street was designated ‘Convalescent Hospital’.” (Michigan Alumnus, November 1900)

In 1918, a children’s ward was built next to the Homeopathic Hospital; it later became the Student Health Service. Since 1940 it has been the Annex to the University Museum.
The Catherine Street Hospitals eventually included a group of some twenty buildings, large and small. These buildings were successively enlarged and added to until the completion of University Hospital in 1925. Many of these buildings were then used as convalescent wards and as other adjuncts to the Hospital.
Catherine Street Hospitals

0. Horse Shed

1. Homeopathic Hospital 1891-1900
   Medical Ward 1900-1925
   Convalescent Ward 1925-1927
   Burned 1927

2. Palmer Ward 1902
   (X-ray in basement 1902-1925)
   (Radiation Laboratory 1931)

3. Nurses & Service 1898-1916
   Orthopedic 1917-1923
   TB Ward 1925-1931

4. Bakery 1911-1925

5. Heating Plant 1891-1897

6. Housekeeping 1918-1947

7. Office of Social Services 1923-1925
   Special Projects Research Building 1925-1951

8. Diet Kitchen 1923-1925
   Social Services Office 1925

9. University Hospital 1891-1900
   Surgical Ward 1900-1925
   East Convalescent Ward 1925-1944
   Rapid Treatment Center 1944-1950
   Institute for Social Research 1950

10. Fire Station 1916-1931

11. Psychopathic Hospital 1906-1939
    East Hospital 1939-1944
    Beal Residence 1944

    Ward Helpers’ Cottages 1925-1940

14. First Laundry 1891-1898
    First Contagious Ward 1898-1914

15. Dermatology Ward 1916-1932

16. Eye and Ear Ward 1909-1925
    Maternity Ward 1925-1950

17. & 18. Summer House 1898-1945

19. Interns’ Home 1914-1941
    Heredity Clinic 1944
    Removed 1969

20. Hospital Heating Plant 1897-1925
    Section Used for Laundry 1897-1917
    Clinical Laboratory 1917-1925
    Wood Utilization Laboratory 1926

21. Sanitary Experimental Station
    1914-1929
    Pigeon Loft 1929-1948
    Wood Laboratory Storage 1948

22. Pemberton-Welch Nurses’ Residence
    1921-1956

23. Contagous Diseases House 1914
    Removed 1956
The first Medical Building was completed in 1850, with an addition in 1864. The Medical Department obtained the funds to build a new and much larger building in 1903. The original building served the University for over 50 years. The 1864 addition proved so dangerous and ill-adapted that on the completion of the new building, it was no longer used for classes. On August 12, 1911 a fire broke out on the third floor of the addition wing of the original building, destroying the west half of the building. The front was saved only to be razed in 1914, to the regret of all medical alumni who had raised funds to save the building and adapt it for modern conditions of instruction.

The Anatomical Laboratory, completed in 1889, gave the medical students better facilities to study anatomy.

The East Medical Building stood at the angle formed by the junction of East University and Washtenaw Avenues. The building was completed in February of 1925. The University Buildings and Grounds Department acted as contractors, and Albert Kahn of Detroit was the architect. Dark red brick faced with white stone trim emphasized its straight unadorned lines and helped achieve harmony with the East Engineering Building just to the south.

The building was designed for work in anatomy, with a completely equipped morgue. The Department of Bacteriology was given special lighted space for research. Space was allotted for photographic rooms, general research rooms for advanced students, and classrooms and large lecture rooms. A gross anatomy laboratory was provided for dentistry and physical education students.
Although the Medical School and its clinical activities had outgrown the Catherine Street complex by the early 1900s, the building of a new hospital was delayed for several years. At first the plan was to construct the new hospital in units or sections, costing about $350,000 each, as the money was appropriated. This did not prove feasible, and the entrance of the United States into World War I further delayed the progress of the building. The construction proceeded slowly as funds were made available. New patients were moved into the new hospital in August of 1925. The new hospital was nine stories high, with six stories available for patients and the balance used for hospital service such as kitchens, hospital stores, dining rooms, cafeterias, clothes storage, etc.

In 1931 two additional stories were added to the hospital, allowing the addition of 98 beds devoted to the care and treatment of tuberculosis. Incorporated in the addition were a light therapy room and a number of laboratories. In 1939 a surgical wing was added behind the hospital, providing a pathology museum, two amphitheatres, bacteriology laboratory, clinical laboratory, serology laboratory, library, eleven operating rooms, a number of lecture rooms, and ninety-two private rooms for patients. An eighty-five bed neuropsychiatric wing was also added.

The Medical School was located on the central campus for over 100 years. In 1958 the move began to relocate the school nearer to the University Hospital when the first unit of the Medical Science Building was ready for occupancy. This building provided adequate accommodations for the departments of Pathology, Biological Chemistry, and Pharmacology, all of which, with the Medical School Administration, were moved into the new quarters from the West Medical Building.

The Medical Science Building II was completed in July of 1969. This unit housed the departments of Anatomy, Genetics, Microbiology, and Physiology. It also provided instructional facilities to meet the needs of increased enrollment, plus research areas for both faculty and students. This brought together for the first time all of the Medical School Departments in one area. Both Medical Science I and Medical Science II were connected by a bridge to the Main Hospital.
The University of Michigan Medical Campus circa 1970
The most ambitious Medical Center project was the Replacement Hospital, a new 954-bed hospital to replace “Old Main,” the old University Hospital. This $300 million project faced considerable political resistance from around the state, and its size required an entirely new funding mechanism. The state created a State Building Authority which could sell bonds ($173 million worth) that would be paid off over 30 years by leasing the Hospital to the University, which received a $33 million/year appropriation to pay the lease. The University also contributed $114 million of its own funds through bonding and gifts. This unusual approach became standard procedure for state-financed campus projects in the 1980s and beyond.

In addition to the massive new hospital, the Medical Center built a new Child and Maternal Health Care Hospital to replace Mott Children’s and Women’s Hospitals. The Kellogg Eye Center was opened, and a high-rise Cancer and Geriatrics Center was constructed. A trio of sophisticated research laboratories, Medical Science Research Buildings I, II, and III, came on line to keep the Medical School at the forefront of biomedical research.

As the Medical Center growth began to strain against the limits of its downtown Ann Arbor site, the University Hospitals acquired a large site northeast of Ann Arbor and began to develop its East Medical Campus to respond to the need for additional primary care facilities. It also developed new primary care facilities throughout southeastern Michigan, including a major concentration in the Briarwood area in south Ann Arbor. During the 1990s the University explored the merger of its Medical Center with those of the Sisters of Mercy, including St. Joseph’s Mercy Hospital near the East Medical Campus, with the aim of creating a major concentration of world-class health care comparable to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. However, after careful consideration, the Regents decided to continue on the current track.

The total cost of the expansion during the 1980s was almost $1 billion, and it paid off handsomely by creating one of the most profitable medical centers in the nation throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Since the University owned contiguous property connecting the East Medical Campus, North Campus, the Medical Center, Central Campus, the Athletic Campus, and the Briarwood Shopping Center on the south of Ann Arbor, the possibility of a light rail system connecting these points and providing a transportation network into the city was also explored in the 1990s, but abandoned by a new administration.
At the dawn of the new millennium, the Medical Complex continues to grow with the need for more research and patient-care facilities. New building activity includes the Cardiovascular Center, C. S. Mott Children’s & Women’s Hospital, Rachel Upjohn Depression Center, and a new Biosciences Building, along with the Life Sciences Institute Buildings.