

# Roman medicine: uncovering the beginning

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In early Rome, medicine took some time to begin to advance, but once it started there was nothing holding the discoveries back. All of these early detections that took place around 2, 300 years ago which are viewed as home remedies today, were considered rather complex and have collectively led to the new medical breakthroughs of the present day. While early Roman medicine started off without much progress, it had evolved to impact the perspective and development of medicine today through the first simple tools and ancient methods. Early Medicine To prevent disease and illness according to the early Romans, the gods needed to constantly be happy.

They are the ones who had the power to cause illness against anyone they are not pleased with and “ people could not prevent or control disease, so there was no point in studying it” (Harris 35). Conventional wisdom has it that this is preposterous, but with the lack of scientific breakthroughs before this time period, these beliefs were strongly practiced until the Romans conquered Greece and some of their physicians were transferred to the Romans. Even after the Greek physicians and doctors had brought their medical advancements and techniques, some Romans were still skeptical and found this new belief hard to comprehend. While the Romans rarely admit as much, they would not have prospered as efficiently as they had without the help of the Greek. As Kate Kelly presents: Eventually, the Romans began to rely on their Greek predecessors for what the Greeks had learned about medicine. As the Roman Empire grew, the Romans took with them many of the Greek ideas, which they had adopted regarding medicine.

A new health innovation, the hospital, was a convenience offered to the Roman military and eventually to the civilians (139). The Greek, including

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Hippocrates, disagreed with the Roman's perspective of illness; Hippocrates and Asclepiads were two prime examples of physicians who understood the human body differently than the commoners. For example, Jacqueline Harris specifies that a man who was presumed dead did not look dead to him; after walking over and observing the man momentarily, he concluded this man was not dead and only needed a little massage and some cold water to reestablish him back to health. He soon became well known around Rome for his miraculous deed because those who had observed it, hastily spread the word for they could not hold such an impressive accomplishment to themselves. Along with the scientific advancements, some other discoveries were also founded.

To be more precise, “ many of Rome's most important advances in medical technology did not involve treatment of disease. They involved disease prevention through sanitation and public health measures” (Woods 71). Because of the time period, their understanding of how swiftly germs will move from person to person through these public areas was impressive. Sewage disposal, for obvious reasons, was a key component to the attempt to prevent a city spread disease. On the other end of the spectrum however, aqueducts allowed for a constant flow of clean and safe drinking water for a community which were also instilled in their establishments. Roman Medics In 129 C.

E. one of the most prominent medical minds emerged. Kate Kelly, author of *The History of Medicine*, acknowledges that he [Claudius Galen] lived 600 years after Hippocrates, but he became a strong believer in Hippocratic ideals and set about to revive many of the Greek Physician's original

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teachings (121). His belief in their methods allowed for him to strive and surpass other physicians of his time. Jeanne Bendick claims that Galen practiced a therapeutic sense of healing by using various teas to sooth different types of pain in his patients; peppermint tea was typically used for headaches, clove tea worked wonders for depression, and chamomile tea managed to calm down the nerves of anyone who was tense or with a high anxiety level. Galen was a confident man who was soon able to approach medicine more logically than most of his peers; he did not view medicine as magic, but as a science.

His confidence was what led him to the peak of discoveries during his time and he was well aware of his success as proven by his following statement, “ I alone have indicated the true methods of treating diseases” (Harris 44). After Galen had died, the Romans slowly fell back into their original standpoint on medicine. Galen was a talented, special, and valued physician and was referred to as “ a medical genius” (Harris 44). He was not used for the commoners, but only for the use of talented, special, valued and worthy people. These people included the royals, or emperors, and warriors. Such a magnificent healer could not be used for a commoner or anyone beneath a worthy status.

Galen was able to achieve his high ranking through his dedication to learn more about the human body; this was pursued “ from studying pigs and monkeys” (Bendick 2). Galen was not the only one who could heal the sick or injured; “ people who were ill or in pain, depressed or upset, came to the temple for help” (Bendick 26), but this only applied to those who could not afford the excellent services of Galen who was clearly the preferred server.

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Aulus Cornelius Celsus was another prosperous physician in his time; he created an eight volume book filled with medical information that he had gathered, learned, and discovered throughout his lifetime which took place during the first century. His book was entitled “ De Medicina” which translates to “ Of Medicine”. In this book, Aulus Celsus had accurately described inflammation, distinguished between acute and chronic diseases, and made other precise observations about medicine and the human body” (Woods 62).

All of these were major accomplishments which shocked researchers when they were rediscovered during searches. Unfortunately, not many people during the time period of Celsus were as educationally evolved and did not comprehend most of the more significant and crucial work that he did so, similarly to Galen, his work temporarily died off with him. Effect on Medicine Today Medicine today has evolved drastically since Galen and Celsus’ time, but it all started to branch off of what they had contributed to society.

Surgeons used tools that were “ razor sharp” (Woods 21), that were disposable when performing an operation. These tactics were advanced for their time period and we still follow similar procedures; now, surgeons have a variety of sharp objects used to probe around while performing a surgery and used tools are sent back to the distributors who then disinfect the utensils properly and efficiently before sending them back to be used once again.

To remove a barb from a wounded soldier, operators would use a “ spoon like instrument” (Woods 71) to remove the barb as simply and painlessly as probable. Pulling a barb out without an attempt with this device would

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immediately cause further damage; this excess wound could easily lead to an infection which without treatment can be fatal. Nowadays adaptation's have been made and doctors can safely remove an unwanted object from a person and fight the rare, but still possible infection. One of the most popular methods that were around in the first centuries which had been carried over was the soothing temptation of honey. Honey was used in many different types of remedies and could be used for almost all pains faced including ear aches, tonsil swelling, deep wounds, and coughing.

Certain ones have carried over the centuries while others have been replaced with a more effective healing process. Currently, ear aches are treated with antibiotics if someone has an ear infection instead of placing drops of honey mixed with salt into an infected area. Dealing with swollen tonsils has also advanced and prospered to having them removed instead of gargling with honey. Deep wounds are yet another example of how medicine has developed and progressed to a more sophisticated state of healing. The Romans used to clean out deep, dirty cuts with this magical solution. Coughing, however is still treated with this comforting, resulting, home remedy.

The smooth texture of honey thinly coats the sore throat which prevents some of the scratchiness and itching. Because “ honey is one of the most complex natural mixtures and mainly consists of carbohydrates” (28 Honey in Traditional and Modern Medicine), it could be used in a number of different cases. Conclusion The productive work of the Roman medics before modern day has led to the great achievements and advancements that have saved millions of lives. These lives have been preserved thanks to early tools and <https://assignbuster.com/roman-medicine-uncovering-the-beginning/>

simple remedies which were have been perfected and added upon. The early medicine from the Romans was based off of the Greek who also played a major part in these evolutions and the warnings of sanitation also further progressed. Specific talented minds including Galen and Celsus personally contributed a lot of the knowledge to current developments.

Specific treatments were able to provide a beginning platform for some of these major progressions. These two main focuses were the first stepping stone for all modern day accomplishments and rescues.