

# Medieval medicine

[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



Shaan Sarode Ms. Davis English IV – Per. 3 20 October 2010 Impact of Medieval Medicine Imagine when a friend gets sick or catches a “ bug”, they may have two different reactions to it. The first is the realistic approach, which re-visits their recent actions and pinpoints the cause of the symptoms. The other is the non-realistic, which tends to blame supernatural causes. People during the medieval times almost always blamed the supernatural as the cause of these diseases. There were also many limitations in the amount of scientific advancement because of the church. In modern days, we may take for granted the achievements that have been made over the centuries, but these break-throughs could not have been realized, without the foundation and work of scientists during the medieval time. Medieval medicine affected all parts of life in those times, from scientific to social, and in positive and negative ways. Medieval medicine had too many influences from the church which therefore hindered its progress. Most of the treatments and beliefs in folk medicine were mystical or magical, and had its basis in sources that were not agreed upon in the Christian faith.

Remedies included spells and incantations, but later these had to be replaced with Christian prayers or devotions. The church taught that diseases or ailments were sent by God as a punishment for wrong doing, so many people resisted the explanations of illness. Therefore advancement in medicine was generally frowned upon. The main setback was that, “ scholarship fell into the religious sphere, and clerics were more interested in curing the soul than the body. ” (Terry 1)As sanitation and hygiene worsened with the increasing population in England and other parts of Europe, diseases were rampant. “ Medieval Europe did not have an

adequate health system. " (Odunsi 5) Edward the III complained to the Lord Mayor of London: " Cause the human faeces and other filth lying in the streets and lanes in the city to be removed with all speed to places far distant, so that no greater cause of mortality may arise from such smells.

" (Trueman 1) Some people blamed the stench of waste to cause illnesses. Astronomers blamed the planets and their un-alignment. Everyone had their own opinions on the matter as there wasn't any hard evidence of the actual cause. Another dilemma to the people was the matter of how the diseases spread. As most of the population consisted of farmers in those times, they had little or no, formal education. So when someone acquired a disease, they went to their local physician, which was an all-around doctor. Physicians were scarce, but seen as skilled people because of their ' knowledge.

In reality, their work was based on a very poor knowledge of the human anatomy. (Trueman 3) The affect of medical studies, cures, and its problems left society vulnerable to, in fact more diseases. As people were unaware of the causes and cures, they relied on local physicians who weren't exactly well versed. This may in turn result in a misdiagnosis and the patient ending up more ill or dead. This dilemma pushed people to seek their own remedies. The most interesting part of medicine in the medieval times was the remedy and curing. These varied throughout society depending on your background, wealth, and religiousness.

Some, more religiously bound " doctors told patients that a pilgrimage to a holy shrine to show your love of God would cure them of illnesses especially if they had some holy water sold at the place of pilgrimage. " (Truman 1) As

one can see, any treatment that you thought was right could have worked better than another, as cures were based on more of a philosophical look rather than with scientific back-up. Some weird cures were to hold a candle close to your teeth to burn off the worms on the teeth. Another was to cut a hole in someone's skull to let out bad spirits, which was supposed to cure their mental disease. All in all, medieval medicine had impacts on society, but was mainly influenced by the thinking and ideas of the time. Works Cited

Odunsi, Yolonda. " Health: What was it really like to live in the middle ages? "

Washington, D.

C. : Annenberg Media, 1997. Web.