

MEDIEVAL MEDICINE 1250-1500

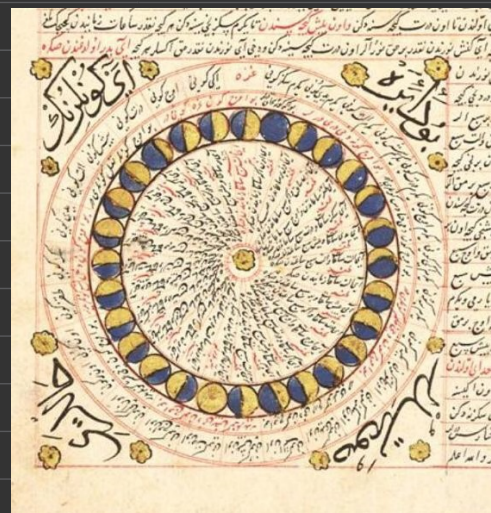
PERCEIVED CAUSES OF DISEASE:

Sin: disease was seen as a punishment from God e.g. 1346 Black Death (God 'deserted' man)

Astrology: the use of Islamic Almanac calendars helped spot patterns between the alignment of planets & epidemics e.g. 1345 strange alignment of Jupiter, Mars & Saturn

4 humours theory: coined by Hippocrates, stated: 4 humours (black & yellow bile, blood & phlegm) had to be balanced to ensure good health. Later, Galen expanded on his works by creating the 'theory of opposites', if one humour was unbalanced it could be counteracted using the opposite effect e.g. via purging/bloodletting

Miasma: impure air from decaying bodies & abattoirs



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CHURCH:

Held a major influence on society e.g. in the realms of academia (scholars were taught by Galen's textbooks), dissections were condemned as the body had to be buried whole to resurrect. Galen promoted ideas regarding the immortality of the soul & rich Church institutions weren't challenged, facilitating a lack of medical progress.

COMMON TREATMENTS:

(In response to Sin) pilgrimages, intercessions, repentance & flagellants (those who underwent public whipping to profess their sorrows) were popularised

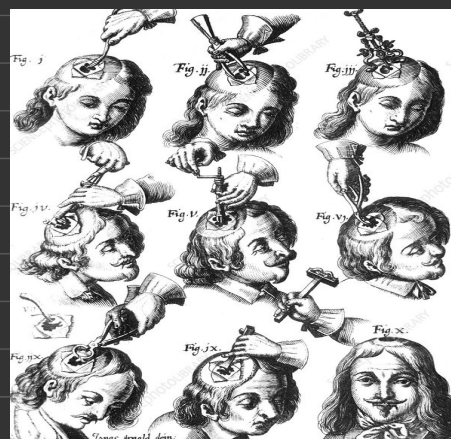
(To balance humours) phlebotomies (blood letting) using leeches and purging (via the use of laxatives)

(To combat miasma) posies + lavender were carried to 'purify' air

(To be rid of the supernatural) trepanning of the skull would expel demons



Church



Expulsion of demons

MEDIEVAL MEDICINE 1250-1500

PLACES OF TREATMENT:

Apothecaries: accessible, sold herbal remedies derived from spices and minerals but also sold poison (went against the Hippocratic oath to do no harm)

Surgeries: performed by barber-surgeons who specialised in removing cataracts

Home: wise women mixed herbal remedies

Hospitals: provided spiritual, palliative care and were run by monks and nuns under the church. Terminal illnesses weren't sought to be actually treated, hospitals were places of rest, for many believed interfering with God's divine plan was sinful (no effort to prevent death.)

Spiritual cleansing was prioritised (confessions as part of the last rites sacrament) before the afterlife (a source of hope for medieval england as life expectancy was tragically low.)



Monks & Nuns caring for the impotent



Apothecary

MEDIEVAL MEDICINE 1250-1500

PREVENTION ATTEMPTS:

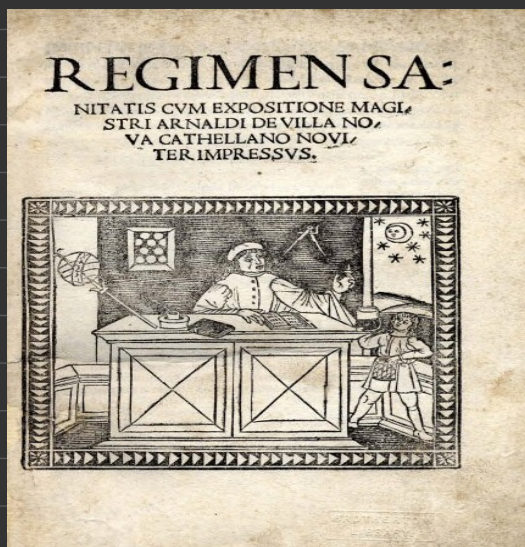
Living a morally-good life by abstaining from sin

Good diets (gout killed many kings who overindulged in rich foods & alcohol, renown as the 'disease of kings')

Regimen Sanitais (1480): guidelines to follow to prevent disease (included: regular bathing and exercise & avoiding stressful situations e.g. crime and dogs barking)

Purifying air using posies & lavender to prevent miasma. Authorities in London also had night carts empty cesspits, rakers, latrines and Roman aqueducts built

Amulets were carried to ward off evil spirits



Regimen Sanitais



Amulet

MEDIEVAL MEDICINE 1250-1500

BLACK DEATH CASE STUDY:

1346: 2 plagues (bubonic & pneumonic 'plagued' Europe)

1/3 of the UK population died

Perceived causes:

Sin (God deserted mankind),



Miasma (Edward III ordered the removal of waste from London streets),

Astrology (1345 strange alignment of Saturn, Jupiter & Mars foreshadowed doom),

Antisemitism (Jews were scapegoated for spreading the disease & expelled from Europe.)

Prevention techniques:

Building new cemeteries (to tackle surplus of dead bodies),

Quarantine (Gloucester attempted to quarantine but failed),

1349 = parliament was closed,

Arsenic was ingested (inadvertently killed rats.)

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ANALYSIS OF THE ERA:

Church's MAJOR influence causing a ban on dissections & lack of attempt to actually heal people meant medical progress was slim.

Galen's archaic ideas had a strong foot in society for more than 1,300 years (attributed to Catholicism & Roman prevalence in the Middle Ages.)

A Laissez faire government attitude was consistent until the Black Death.

A lack of anatomical & medicinal progress lead to continuity in beliefs, rooted in superstition and irrationality.

