

Andrew Wear, ed. *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. vii, 397. Cloth, \$69.95; paper, \$19.95.

The growth of social history has been enormous over recent years. One area of historical study in which this trend has had great impact is medical history. Certainly within living memory historians studying medicine were mostly concerned with the biological and technical work of physicians. Perhaps reflecting the growing concern about health care in modern society, such study began to broaden. A seminal though hardly solitary example of the change is William H. McNeill's *Plagues and Peoples* (1976). By the 1990s medical history has come to be part of our understanding of how people lived as well as the study of the methods and profession that developed to keep them well.

Andrew Wear's anthology *Medicine in Society* is an attempt to pull together our knowledge of the part health care has played in people's lives from the classical era to the latter twentieth century. This is, of course, an enormous undertaking, but within certain parameters the contributors have done excellent work. One limitation is that other than an essay on the classical era by Vivian Nutton, the focus is quite Western and generally, though not exclusively, English and American from the Early Modern period to the present. Topics vary. Andrew Wear has provided a chapter concerning environmental factors and health in Early Modern England, and while such factors are not ignored in other periods, they do not get such in-depth attention. Although such limitations are inevitable in a work of this scope, they do block some useful comparative analysis.

There are several fairly common themes running through the book. Roy and Dorothy Porter have focused particularly on the patient's perspective of therapy for both physical and mental illness, and other contributors, though less specifically, have also tried to give a sense of what medicine has meant to those on the receiving end. Katharine Park and Roy Porter have shown that before the nineteenth century alternative treatments (quackery) and resort to religion were as important as treatment by physicians. The slow pattern of change then began to accelerate in the Enlightenment, when, as discussed by Guenter Risse, new systems of classification and the importance of healthful lifestyles emerged.

Then in the nineteenth century, modern medicine began to take shape. Lindsay Granshaw's essay is focused on the emergence of the hospital as the center of both treatment and study. The growth of public health and professionalization among physicians are discussed by Elizabeth Fee and Dorothy Porter. Paul Weindling has written about the demographic aspects of changing patterns of mortality, which he shows to be much more complicated than simply a matter of improved care and the shift from infectious to chronic illness. Jane Lewis considers the impact of the welfare state and the provision of medical care on a wider and wider scale, and Arthur Imhof concludes with an optimistic assessment of the overall changes in the human condition due to the development of medicine.

Medicine in Society is an important book that will help teachers and students of society and culture better understand the development of what has become a contemporary preoccupation. It shows that health care did not suddenly become a major topic of concern after World War II or even with the rise of scientific medicine in the second half of the nineteenth century. It has influenced people's lives at least since the classical era, and has finally come into the perception of historians, as have so many other elements in society that in the days of history as war and politics were passed over.

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