

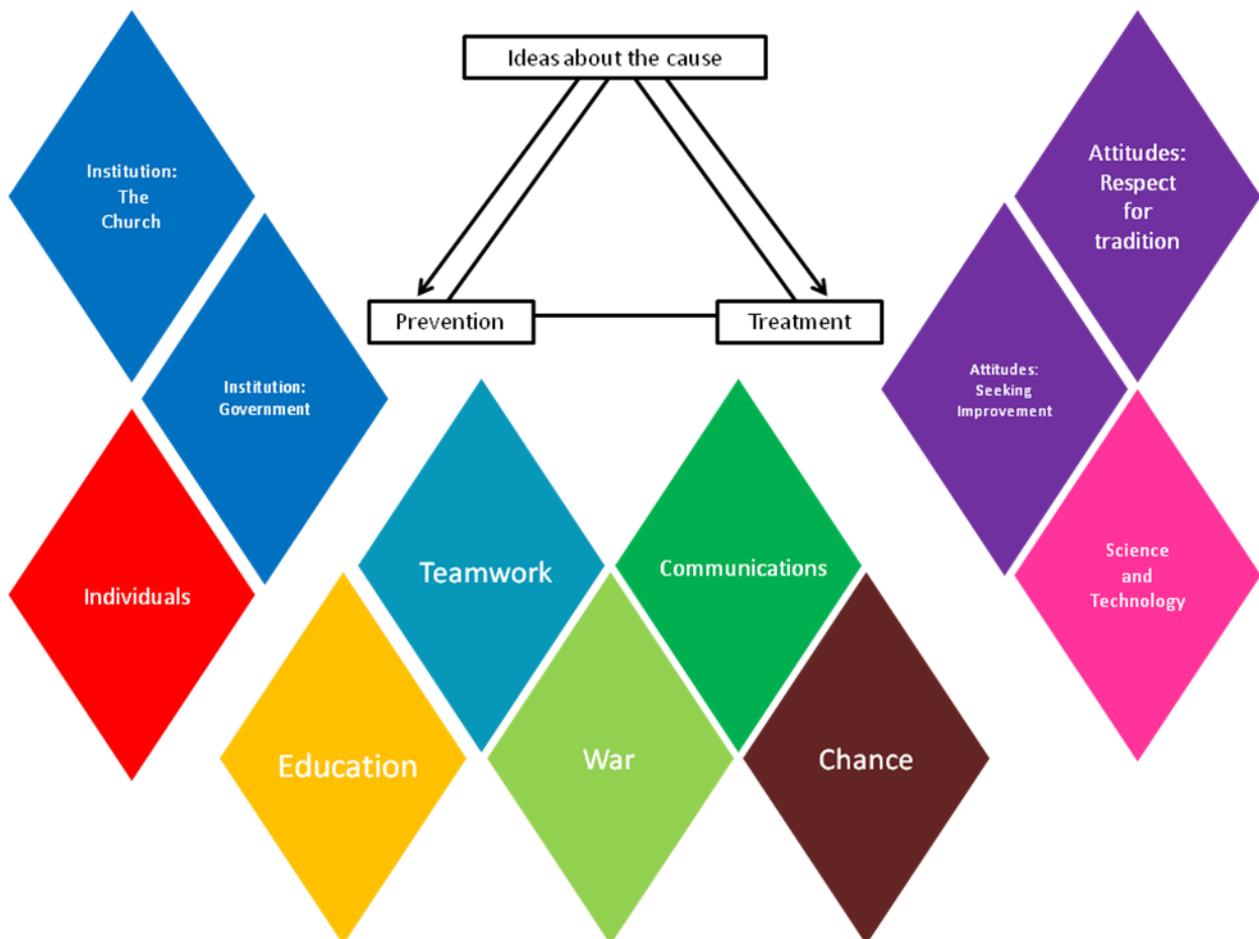
GCSE History Knowledge Booklet

Medieval England c1250-c1500

The History of Medicine is about some of the most important questions in the whole of history. Today we live far longer than our ancestors did. We are healthier and have more chance of surviving major illness. **So why has medicine- and our health - changed so much over the centuries? This paper is about why there were changes and continuities throughout the ages.**

This booklet will help you to focus on medicine in medieval England and the changes and continuities, progress and stagnation in medical thinking and practice.

Examples of Factors that causes change and continuity.



History of medicine Contents

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Key Topic 1: c1250–c1500: Medicine in medieval England

Key Topic 1.1 Ideas about the causes of disease and illness

After the fall of Rome, there was a regression in medicine in Europe. People had a more primitive outlook about what caused disease and how to treat it.

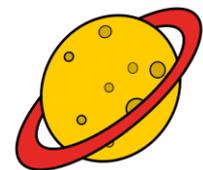


Supernatural and religious explanations

- People believed that Gods caused disease - as seen with Black Death in 1348 as felt was a punishment from God.
- Monasteries preserved old writings by Roman and Greeks so could be studied again later after wars. Islam also preserved old ideas too. However, both of these stopped new ideas (Religion-Helping/Hindering)



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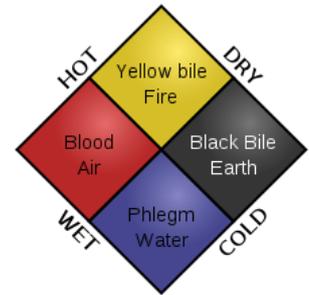
- Some people believed diseases such as the Black Death were caused by position of planets (doctors believed stars and planets affected people's bodies as many from same elements of air, earth, fire and water)

- Some minority groups such as the Jews were blamed in countries.
- Some even though illnesses caused by arrows fired by elves! E.g. chicken-pox

Rational explanations



- In Ancient times Hippocrates (a Greek) developed the idea of the four humours: blood, yellow bile, phlegm and black bile. It was suggested that any imbalance eg. too much phlegm, was the cause of illness.



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- Galen was a Greek who was a doctor during the Roman Empire. Galen developed the theory of the four humours by creating a treatment by opposites.
- People continued to believe in Theory of 4 Humours as Galen promoted these ideas.
- People believed Galen had covered everything so his books had all the answers. They were used for medical training.



- Also, Galens ideas fitted in with Christian church which controlled education in Europe in Middle Ages. Galen said the body was created by one god, who had made all parts of the body fit together perfectly. This matched Christian ideas. (Religion-Hindering)

- Others blamed disease on bad digestion, weakness and blockage.
- Some linked it to bad smells from toilets, standing water or rotting items. First suggestions of miasma theory.



- People had no idea that the Black Death of 1348 carried by rats and spread by fleas due to lack of scientific understanding. The Black Death was the name for the bubonic and pneumonic plagues. Symptoms include blisters, high fever, severe headaches, unconsciousness and death.

Knowledge Check 1.1 Causes of Disease c1250-1500

1. What idea about the cause of disease did Hippocrates come up with?

2. Who was Galen?

3. What were the 4 humours?

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4. Name 2 different kinds of medieval healers

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5. List three things that people thought caused disease in the Middle Ages.

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6. Which organisation supported Galen?

7. Which organisation controlled education in the Middle Ages?

8. What religion did Galen follow?

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9. When did the Black Death come to England?

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10. What was the miasma theory?

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Key Topic 1.2 Approaches to prevention and treatment

How illness was treated

- People in the Middle Ages purged themselves to balance their humours. They used bleeding charts to show where to take blood from.
- People bled regularly to avoid illness - monks bled between seven and twelve times a year.



- Some used leeches to suck out blood. Also did enema (mixture of water and other items) squirted into anus through a pipe attached to pig's bladder.

- Urology was the study of urine, this was common. The physician would match the patient's urine against the colours, smell and density on chart. Use of herbal remedies - new books developed such as Bald's Leechbook which was a collection of treatments. Honey and plantain were common ingredients.



- Decided on best time to carry out treatments using Zodiac man. Believed parts of body linked to signs of Zodiac and planets. Showed doctor when to avoid treating each party of the body.



- Some people prayed to God for forgiveness. During Black Death King Edward III ordered services and processions. 6 foot candles lit as offerings to God. (Religion-Hindering)

- People prayed to God to be merciful and went on pilgrimages to locations such as Canterbury Cathedral (Religion-Hindering)
- Flagellants whipped themselves to get forgiveness for their sins from God (Religion-Hindering)

Who were the medieval Healers?

Attitudes:
Respect
for
tradition

- Doctors (physicians) trained at universities by reading books by Hippocrates and Galen
- In England the Royal College of Physicians was created in In 1518, by Henry VIII

• Armies took trained doctors to war with them where they gained experience as surgeons on battlefield. (War-Helping)



• However, there fewer than 100 physicians in England and only the rich could afford them.

• Surgeons trained by observing others. They improved their skills through practise. They did basic surgery such as bleeding, removing surface tumours and sewing up wounds.

• Apothecaries (chemists) - these people had no medical training, but sold medicines and groceries

• Quacks - these were travelling barbers surgeons and tooth-pullers. They sold medicines which were supposed to cure everything

• Many people turned to wise women, neighbours and local 'witches' to cure disease

• Women could be midwives but had to have licences after qualifying through an apprenticeship.

However, women could not be doctors because they were not allowed to go to university to study medicine.



• Mothers and family members treated most illnesses. Grew herbs for medicine.

• Priests said prayers to help sick and protect from

illness. They ran the hospitals and religion focused on caring for sick. (Religion-Helping)



- Hospitals mostly cared for older people who could not look after themselves. Hospitals were run by monks and nuns who provided food, warmth and prayers. Hospitals rarely admitted the sick in case they spread infection.
- Some hospitals were created for guild members (organisations of wealthy tradespeople) for example shoemakers or silversmiths etc. By 1400 there were over 500 hospitals.

Knowledge Check 1.2 Treatment of disease c1250-1500

1. Give one example of how ill people might try to balance their humours

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2. What is the use of urine to diagnose disease called?

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3. When was the College of Physicians founded?

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4. If you couldn't afford a doctor, who or what could you turn to for help?

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5. What is a quack doctor?

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6. By 1400 how many hospitals were there in England?

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7. Who ran the hospitals?

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8. What type of person would Hospitals not admit?

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9. What is a flagellant?

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10. Why did flagellants act in this way?

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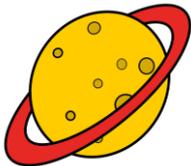
Key Topic 1.3 Dealing with the Black Death, 1348-49

Black Death causes

In 1348 the Black Death reached England. At the time, people did not understand what caused the disease, and they did not know how to stop its spread or cure it. There were both supernatural and natural explanations



for it, for example, some people said that God had sent it as a punishment, others that the planets



were in the wrong conjunction, or that it was caused by 'foul air'. Sometimes groups of people such as the Jews or nobility

were said to be responsible. Even now historians are not sure what caused the Black Death if it was the bubonic plague



it would have actually spread when fleas bite an infected rat and then pass the disease onto other rats and humans.

Symptoms of the Black Death

The victims of Black Death suffered a high temperature, headache and vomiting, followed by lumps (buboes) in the armpit or groin. These then went black and spread all over the body, would lead to unconsciousness and death.



Black Death treatments

There were no effective cures or treatments. People relied on prayer or 'magical cures' or took practical steps. Some attempts included strong-smelling posies as a precaution against 'foul air'. They also ate cool things,



cut open the buboes and draining the pus, lighting a fire in the room, tidying the rubbish from the

streets and not letting people from other places enter the town. Black Death Impact Between one-third to a half of the population died.

Knowledge Check 1.3 The Black Death

1. When did the Black Death come to England?

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2. Give three explanations for what people at the time thought caused the Black Death

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3. If it was Black Death was the bubonic plague how would it actually have been spread?

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4. Outline 3 symptoms of the Black Death

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5. Were there any effective cures?

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6. Identify three methods that people tried to use to cure the Black Death?

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