


Beliefs about causes of illness	The medieval doctor	Christian approach to medicine	Islamic approach to medicine	Public health (living conditions)
<p>Beliefs about causes were unknown. Doctors lacked scientific knowledge and relied upon Church-approved texts such as Galen.</p> <p>Some believed that illness was caused by supernatural things. Most common was that God sent illness as a punishment for sin. Others believed that astrology (planets) and zodiac signs determined why you were ill. Some people believed though that bad smells, poisoned water and the weather played a part.</p> <p>The key belief about the cause of illness was The Four Humours. This was developed by the Greek doctors Hippocrates and Galen. It stated your body was filled with four liquids – yellow bile, black bile, blood and phlegm. They had to balance to be in good health. Your illness was a sign that you had too much/too little of one humour and was associated with the season/weather. This also dictated the treatment you were given.</p> <p>Galen built on this theory by performing dissections of animals to understand more about anatomy. The Church backed his (incorrect) ideas as he believed in 'one creator'</p>	<p>It took at least 7 years to train to become a doctor. Training took place at universities like Oxford/Cambridge and involved attending lectures and debates. It did not usually involve practical experience. Training involved reading ancient texts, such as Galen, approved by the Church.</p> <p>Patients were diagnosed by a doctor taking their pulse, and examining the smell, colour and taste of urine. From this, natural medicines could be prescribed made from plants, spices, oils, wines and rocks.</p> <p>Common treatments included bloodletting, using laxatives and making a patient vomit. All link to the four humours theory of purging. As doctors were expensive treatment could be found from barber surgeons and wise women. These were untrained people offering operations and treatment</p> <p>Surgery was influenced by warfare so amputation was common. Wine was used as antiseptic, natural anaesthetics made from opium and hemlock were used, as was cauterisation to seal wounds. Hospitals mainly cared for patients rather than tried to cure them, as this is what God only could do.</p>	<p>Medieval medicine in Britain was influenced by the Church who wanted everyone to believe in the four humours theory. Those that didn't were criticised e.g. Roger Bacon was sent to prison. The Church forbade dissection until the 14th C. which served to hinder the development of anatomical knowledge. The main issue was that the Church did not want their authority to be questioned. The four humours theory backed up the idea of one God, the creator, who could cure people if they prayed to him. Books that the Church did not want people to read were banned. All of this severely hindered the development of medical and scientific knowledge.</p> <p>However, there were some positives. The Church opened medical schools where the ideas of Galen were taught. Monasteries made an effort to provide clean running water and toilets, improving public health.</p> <p>The Black Death</p> <p>People believed the Black Death of 1348 was a punishment from God. Others thought the cause was because of the position of planets and the alignment of the Sun. Jews were also blamed for poisoning water supplies whilst others blamed bad smells. However, the real cause was from the bites of fleas who live on black rats who had made their way from Asia across the Silk Road trading route.</p>	<p>Islamic scholars picked up and developed ideas from the Greeks whom they greatly admired. They built upon the work of Hippocrates and Galen but also made new developments. Hospitals were opened that sought to cure not just care. Baghdad alone had 60 hospitals in the 1100s when London had one. In Cairo, the Al-Mansur hospital was founded in 1283 and was one of the scientific wonders of the age, It had separate departments for patients with different diseases, a library and lecture halls for training. Developments were made in surgery where new surgical tools were invented, and cat gut was used for stitches</p> <p>Islam failed to spread their ideas very well. Islam Hindered Medicine by not searching for effective treatments because their attitudes to the Koran meant that they were unwilling to criticise other ancient books, such as the writings of Galen.</p>	<p>Public health in towns was poor. Most towns had poor sanitation, waste and excrement was dumped onto streets, into cesspits or into rivers, bath houses were available but only to those who could afford them, regulation did not work as people did not always follow it and governments/local councils did not want to tax people to pay for improvements. People were expected to look after their own health.</p> <p>Conditions in monasteries were better. These were isolated and near a supply of fresh running water.</p> <p>Monks were literate so could read about better health conditions. They stored water in wells, built pipes to take it to sinks, separated kitchens from privies and made bathing compulsory. A monk would be expected to have at least 4 baths a year.</p> 
			<p>The impact was devastating. Approx 33% of the population died, taking 250 years to return to normal levels, churches closed down as there was no one to work in them, the prices of food rose as there were fewer farmers to grow and harvest it. Taxes also rose due to less people paying it. Positively though, wages rose by 400% and people enjoyed better quality of life, diets, clothes, arts and culture.</p>	

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