

Y10 History Renaissance Medicine 1500-1700



Summary

The Renaissance was a period of scientific discovery, with philosophers and scientists coming up with new ideas. The printing press shared ideas across Europe and organisations like the Royal Society encouraged experimentation and learning. The influence of the Church on medicine was reduced and many people now recognised that God did not send disease. There was a greater understanding of anatomy, thanks to Vesalius and Harvey, and most physicians, by the end of the 17th century, no longer believed in the theory of the four humours or in diagnosis using urine. However, there was also a great deal of continuity. Ordinary people still believed in the four humours and miasma, and were slow to accept new ideas. While the practice of medicine did not change much at this time, ideas were starting to change. Therefore this period laid the foundations for changes in medicine to come.

Key Vocabulary

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| Alchemy | An early form of chemistry. Alchemists tried to turn one material into another, mainly with metals. |
| Anatomy | .The science of understanding the structure and make up of the body |
| Dissection | The dismembering of the body to study its anatomical structure. |
| Renaissance | Means “rebirth” . In 16th and 17th centuries there was Medical Renaissance. |
| The Royal Society | A group of people who promote scientific experiments and the sharing of knowledge. The Society received a royal charter from Charles II which gave it more credibility. |
| Secular | Non religious and not connected to spiritual beliefs |
| Syphillis | Sexually transmitted infection also known as the Great Pox. Can cause blindness, paralysis and madness. |

Key Figures

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|-----------------|---|
| Thomas Sydenham | Believed that diseases could be categorised. He valued close observation of symptoms rather than relying on medical books to make a diagnosis. Also known as “the English Hippocrates”. |
| Vesalius | Author of influential books on human anatomy based on human dissection. He discovered over 300 mistakes in Galen’s original works on anatomy. |
| Harvey | Discovered that blood circulates around the body rather than being made in the liver which was Galens theory. |
| Richard Lower | An English scientist and member at the Royal Society. He made the first experimental blood transfusions. |
| Van Leeuwenhoek | A Dutch scientist who observed tiny “animalcules” under the microscope. This was the first observation of bacteria. |
| Pare | Discovered that using a balm on wounds made of egg yolks and turpentine was more effective than sealing wounds with boiling oil on the battlefield. |

Other Resources

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8pdcwx/revision/1>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zmftfg8>

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Challenge

Which doctor/scientist did the most to promote new knowledge in Medicine between 1500 and 1700?

Why did this new knowledge not change treatments for illnesses during this time?

1548: Vesalius’s “ On the Fabric of the Human Body”

1628: William Harvey proves that blood circulates around the body.

1660 :First meeting of the Royal Society

1665: The Great Plague arrives in England.

1676: Thomas Sydenham publishes Observations Medicae.

TIMELINE

1700-1900 Industrial Medicine

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