

An Analysis of Medical Journals from 18th Century Europe

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Introduction

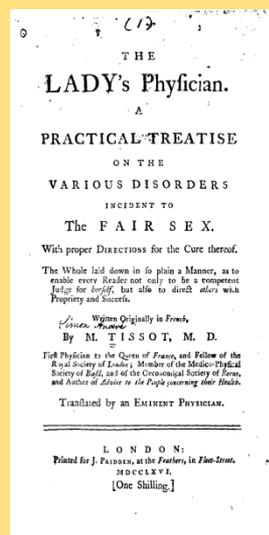
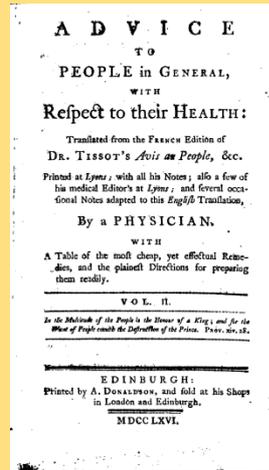
The common cures and medical beliefs in 18th century Europe are the root of modern-day medicine. This research explores how society viewed typical practice at the time of Dr. Samuel-Auguste Tissot of Switzerland, and what may be viewed differently after three centuries. The only effective form of mass communication during the 18th century for physicians was to publish journals that were distributed throughout the city. The journals contained any knowledge the physician may have on common illnesses, usually ones that were out-breaking at the time. The journals also provided remedies for these illnesses.

Method

The data for this research was collected by analyzing three journals written by Dr. Tissot and recording observations relating to the diction used, the tone, and the information itself. The three journals chosen regarded three different views of medical practice. The first, "Advice to People in General, With Respect to their Health" is comparable to household book of remedies because it briefly covers a wide variety of illnesses and injuries. "The Lady's Physician" is centered around women and only addresses the symptoms and medical issues unique to their sex. Finally, "Thoughts on the Sin of Onan" expresses the immorality behind masturbation, which was a very controversial topic at this time.

References

- "Advice to People in General, With Respect To Their Health," S. A. Tissot
- "The Lady's Physician," S. A. Tissot
- "Thoughts on the Sin of Onan," S. A. Tissot



Results

- The most commonly prescribed medicines to numerous illnesses were chamomile, elder-flower tea, herbs, barks, and warm water.
- A typical practice to rid of any given humour was to "bleed" the patient, or extract blood from their arm or leg.
- The quality of air as well as the patient's diet greatly affects their health, arguably more than any other influence.
- The diction used is very graphic, including detailed descriptions of the colors, smells, and consistencies of feces, urine, vomit, blood, and other bodily fluids.
- Physicians were more concerned with preventing illnesses and encouraging a healthy lifestyle than prescribing medicine afterwards.
- Masturbation was viewed as a "self pollution" that has serious physical affects on the body, including blindness, epilepsy, and closing of the throat.

Conclusion

Compared to today, medial procedures were much more natural and simple in Europe during the 18th century. Almost any illness could be cured with warm, aromatic drinks, a light diet, country air, and the occasional letting of blood. Both physicians and their parents needed to write very descriptively due to the lack of availability of physicians in a given city. There were not many opportunities to communicate, which explains the very straightforward diction. Further research could be conducted to compare specific medicines and procedures of today to European history for more medical results.