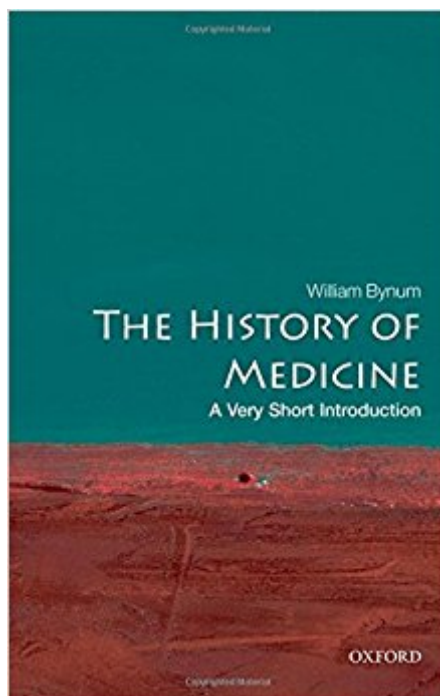


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The History Of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Against the backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of health care, this Very Short Introduction surveys the history of medicine from classical times, through the scholastic medieval tradition and the Enlightenment to the present day. Taking a thematic rather than strictly chronological approach, W.F. Bynum, explores the key turning points in the history of Western medicine-such as the first surgical procedures, the advent of hospitals, the introduction of anesthesia, X-Rays, vaccinations, and many other innovations, as well as the rise of experimental medicine. The book also explores Western medicine's encounters with Chinese and Indian medicine, as well as nontraditional treatments such as homeopathy, chiropractic, and other alternative medicines. Covering a vast amount of information, this Very Short Introduction sheds new light on medicine's past, while at the same time engaging with contemporary issues, discoveries, and controversies, such as the spiraling costs of health care, lack of health insurance for millions, breakthrough treatments, and much more. For readers who wish to understand the how we have arrived at our current state of medical practice and knowledge, this book is essential reading.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

Book Information

Paperback: 184 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (August 24, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 019921543X

ISBN-13: 978-0199215430

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.5 x 4.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (22 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I borrowed this book from a friend. I have no training in medicine and really no interest, but I felt it would be good to know at least something about medicine and its history. Boy was I surprised! This is an interesting, entertaining, accessible history and I am really glad I read it. I think the way the author broke medicine down into aspects of the laboratory, community, hospitals, etc was brilliant. I have mixed reviews of these Very Short Introductions. Sometimes they do a great job of introducing a topic and other times I feel they are too based in theory or academics, and that they are nothing but glorified Wikipedia articles. This book lands in the former category. I highly recommend it!

I have read the History of Medicine once. I am going to read it again. It emphasizes that medicine is an art, not a science; a fallible art, not a sure thing; a game that is played by trial and error, not by any sort of scientific deduction. He emphasizes that the history of medicine is the story of just a few major breakthroughs, and he sees the history of medicine as very much an unfinished story... But how much more can be achieved remains an open question.

This is an admirably concise and interesting overview of a very broad topic covering the ancient world to modern times. A good introduction for those who want some basic background on a fascinating topic. The writing style is generally fluid, and the historical illustrations are a bonus. My chief criticisms are as follows: 1) occasionally a subject will call out for slightly more elaboration than is provided - for example, the concept of the "moral treatment" in psychiatric care was not really explained - though this is a very minor criticism since the book covers so much territory; 2) portions of the last chapters feel a bit disjointed and lack the smooth flow that characterizes most of his writing, and 3) this book should be titled "The History of Western Medicine" since there is virtually no mention of events beyond Europe. The author acknowledges this in the intro, but a simple title shift would alert buyers that this volume will not cover the entire global picture. These are admittedly minor flaws and I otherwise highly recommend this as a quick read.

A good, solid quick summary of the history of medicine. Understand that, if you are looking at this book (and have never read any others in this series), it is fairly short and you won't get a ton of information beyond the basics of the subject. That being said, for what it is it does a great job of giving an overview that is easy to read and stays on topic. This is a good source for anyone interested in this subject.

This was my first introduction to the History of Medicine. I have now read many other -- and much

longer -- books on the topic and I continue to be amazed by how much Bynum packed into this slender volume, without at all making it dense or difficult to read.

A good book, but hard to summarize so briefly the history of medicine over the centuries. However, the author brought to life many of the great scientists and researchers involved in the history of medicine and how they went about their discoveries. He had a unique way of discussing medicine by dividing it up into the library, hospital, public health area, bedside, and laboratory.

Really enjoyable quick read that takes you through a quick history of medicine and healthcare practice. While the focus is mainly on the western practice of medicine it was still a concise and well-researched read.

Good read. Provides exactly what the title entails. You will pick up some really interesting tidbits throughout the storyline. If you want a crash course on the history of medicine this is a good a book as any to start.

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