

# *News, Notes and Queries*

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## PALAEOPATHOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

PALAEOPATHOLOGY is the study of diseases including those of early man and his non-human ancestors in ancient times. It plays an important part in medical history, which, in addition to these discernible manifestations of disease, deals also with the written record of aetiology, clinical aspects, recognition, prognosis, and treatment of illnesses. In the case of palaeopathology precise evidence of a specific pathological process is available; for example, the discovery of *Schistosoma* eggs in the kidneys of an Egyptian mummy. On the other hand, the literary data of medical history, such as a case history recorded by a Hippocratic physician, is often less precise. The two subjects, however, overlap and complement each other, and it is hoped that as information accumulates, pathological findings will help to elucidate contemporary medical texts, and vice versa. In addition, palaeopathological and recorded data should be interpreted in the light of factors known to influence human groups, in particular those concerning population, ecology, climate, topography, flora, fauna, geomorphology, etc. The ultimate objective must be a combined study of the biology and pathology of communities, based on the integration of scientific and documentary evidence. So far, palaeopathology has been concerned mainly with diseases in periods up to and including the Middle Ages, but it should also be employed in the investigation of the history of disease in later populations.

The Palaeopathology Association consists of a loosely-organized group of people from many diverse fields, who are united by a common interest in ancient disease. It arose as a result of a symposium held in Detroit in February 1973, which dealt with "Life and death in Ancient Egypt". The Association has no funds, rules or officers, but communicates largely through personal contact and a quarterly newsletter (editor: Eve Cockburn, 18655 Parkside, Detroit, Michigan 48221; subscription \$5.00 a year—\$2.00 in England). There are at present about 250 members in sixteen countries, and anyone with special resources and interests is invited to join. Two symposia have been held and more are planned for the future.

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## AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION—AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

On 29 December 1974, a joint session of the American Association for the History of Medicine and the American Historical Association was held at the annual meeting of the latter organization (Chicago, 28–30 December). The subject was *Health in the City* and the following papers were presented: (1) "Health in the city: A comparative approach", George Rosen, Yale University; (2) "Social class and medical care: the hospital in nineteenth-century Boston", Morris Vogel, Temple University; (3) "Use and abuse of medical charity: late nineteenth-century New York", Gert Brieger, Duke University; (4) "Comment", Charles Rosenberg, University of Pennsylvania. The session was chaired by George Rosen.