

Summaries of articles

Noble Doctors and Court Doctors in the 18th Century

Guy CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET

The 18th century witnessed a renewed appreciation on the part of society of the dignity of doctors and their art. Generally lacking the favors of Fortune, however, they remained behind the other, more privileged categories in the race for social promotion. Frequently merit more than money opened the way to nobility. Another mean existed as well: service at court, founded on a good reputation and a solid network of acquaintances, constituted a privileged path to both wealth and nobility.

Doctors and Notables under the Consulat and the Empire

Jacques LÉONARD, Roger DARQUENNE,
Louis BERGERON

What rank did doctors, surgeons and health officers occupy in the professional elite (composed of a few dozen persons on the average) of each department around 1810? It varied greatly from one department to another but was on the whole still minor. In the order of professions, the doctor is on a par with the mayor of a small or middle-sized town. He is, for the time being, well behind the bourgeoisie formed by the legal and paralegal professions, and enjoys but a modest income.

This study is presented in detail for the departments of the west of France (J. Léonard), for one Belgian department (R. Darquenne) and is followed by a survey of the national situation in France (L. Bergeron).

The Image of the Enlightenment Doctors (1776-1789)

Daniel ROCHE

The eulogies read by Vicq d'Azyr in public sessions of the Société royale de médecine allow us to understand better the social and political aspirations of the progressive medical milieux in France at the end of the Ancien Régime. The perpetual secretary of the Académie de médecine uses these idealized prosopographies to make a case for the

encouragement of talent on an egalitarian basis. To this end, he sets out the steps necessary in an education, the importance of early family teaching, the essential role of travel in learning, and the possibility of restructuring medical studies. Three principles orient his thinking: unite the medical professions to form one body, proclaim the alliance of the natural sciences and the medical sciences, combine the teaching of book theory with practical experience in hospitals and clinics. While defining entirely socialized patterns of behavior, the eulogies contain a veritable meditation on the politics of the medical corps: to care for is to take in hand and to govern.

Being both patriots and citizens, the doctors of the Enlightenment proved their capacity for leadership by their devotion and ultimately by their sacrifice. The eulogies of Vicq d'Azyr thus allow us to understand better prerevolutionary mental habits and the constitution of modern medical ideology.

Women, Religion and Medecine in 19th-Century France

Jacques LÉONARD

Although a certain misogyny is justly pointed up in 19th-century French society, there were, nevertheless, in the field of health, women, religious, who played a significant role in hospitals and homes and in serving the indigent in the countryside. After the Revolution, the increase in nuns accompanied and was the expression of the re-catholicization; but it also provided a solution to pressing situations which the notables were happy to resolve at the least expense possible. Their social and moral influence was reinforced by the complicity of the feminin opinion and by encouragement from clerical elites. Having neither diploma nor permit, they practiced illegally medicine and pharmacy. Accused of multiple and sometimes criminal neglect, they outwitted offensives which would have reduced the competition they represented and restricted their authority. Behind these conflicts, quite real and varied, compromises were struck between the medical corps and the women of the Church: the latter often served as mediators between doctor and peasant; they supported right-thinking practitioners and accustomed the people to seek and follow the counsel of hygiene and science.

Popular and Learned Medicine in France in (1786-1790)

Jean-Pierre GOUBERT

On the basis of answers given in two administrative surveys, one conducted by the Contrôle général in 1786, the other, under the auspices of the Comité de salubrité, an analysis is performed of the language used by the "enlightened" medical corps of this period in speaking of so-called popular medicine. The homogeneity of this language is striking and independent of geographic origin or social position of the speaker. The aggressive and vengeful qualities of this "language" tend to obscure the originality of a popular "wisdom" concerning the body; a wisdom which scorns the rational principles dear to the hearts of the Enlightenment society. This defiance only confirms the superiority of professional competence and a learned culture.

Finally, the silences and contradictions peculiar to doctors and surgeons are brought out: the passive, perhaps even resigned, attitude of the majority contrasts with the repressive attitude of a small minority, preoccupied with monopolizing the huge field of health by dint of rules and regulations.

**Midwives and Accoucheurs:
Popular Obstetrics in the 17th and 18th Centuries**

Jacques GÉLIS

Written by and for doctors, the history of obstetrics long remained a history of obstetrical techniques; it was only incidentally that interest was taken in the woman and the new-born child.

Until the last century, childbirth was a dangerous process, especially in the country, that the community midwife was not always able to control. But with the end of the 17th century, the near monopoly of the midwives was broken by the accoucheurs whose scheme was favored by the evolution of the mores, the support of the State, and the understanding of the Church.

The creation of schools for midwives, in the second half of the 18th century, brought childbirth under the control of doctors: the midwife became a simple assistant.

Birth in the 17th and 18th Centuries

Mireille LAGET

We can get an idea of the manner in which childbirth was carried out in the 17th and 18th centuries from documents which approach the process from without: manuals for accoucheurs, studies on midwives, surgeons' correspondence, literary accounts and parish records. We can, however, also contribute to history a concrete view of childbirth at this time: the passive and subordinate situation of women, suffering and resignation, primitive practices of midwives who occupy an eminent position in society but whose methods are often routine and careless, efforts on the part of surgeons in the 18th century to enlighten and inform. The social and medical aspects of childbirth are a fascinating and not too difficult study. It is harder to penetrate the mental universe of these women, their apprehensions, their fatalism, and to evaluate the weight of taboos, ancestral fears, the glorification of suffering by the Catholic church. One thing is certain: in the domain of technique, childbirth, a drama played out among women, was, as of the 19th century, taken over by men. And this was to become more and more definitive. On the other hand, mental habits evolve much more slowly, and the state of mind of women about to give birth is still very dependent on ancestral anxieties.

Craftsmen and Professional Diseases

Arlette FARGE

Using as a basis for the study the manuscripts of the Société royale de médecine dealing with diseases of craftsmen in the 18th century, it is interesting to pick out in the language of both the doctors and the work inspectors of the time the ambiguous articulations which establish a link between the needs for order in the city, for efficient work and for an enlightened humanism. The style of speech, which begins to take form as early as 1768, already contains all of the elements which underly the dominant 19th-century ideology concerning the worker's body, his mores, his production capacity and what his family life should be. The 18th-century humanist already dreamed of well-lighted work-shops; everything that is opaque was easily blamed on the worker; he must therefore be educated in order to be saved from himself.

**Town and Country:
Infancy in the 18th Century**

Marie-France MOREL

Continually present in the language used by doctors and administrators of the 18th century when speaking of the care of the young child, the opposition town/country is used in two opposing senses, apparently contradictory. At times the country is seen as being that place which is dominated by the "prejudices" and "animal" passions of the wet-nurses (they give the infants crude milk, badly cooked pablum and swaddle the child out of laziness). Whereas in the towns, the light of Reason can enlighten good mothers who follow the advice of their doctors. At other times, the city is presented as a place of luxury and moral decadence, as opposed to the country which is naturally good and pure, where children grow up healthy and hearty, unlike the sickly children raised in town. In reality "town" and "country" serve as abstract places, vehicles of an ideology: it is this opposition itself that is important and with it, the ever-present valorization of urban medical science at the expense of popular wisdom.

**Hospital Structure in France
at the end of Ancien Régime**

Muriel JEORGER

On the basis of a survey conducted in 1792, whose data are confirmed by various other sources, we have tried to describe and analyze the complex and little-known structure of hospitals in France during the second half of the 18th century.

We first tried a rough statistical and geographical approach to the question: there seem to have been, at the time, some 1961 hospitals with between one hundred- and one hundred-twenty thousand beds which were unevenly distributed. A simple separation of these hospitals into three categories with their respective number of beds brings out the basic characteristic of Public Welfare (l'Assistance) at the dawn of the Revolution. It was for the unwanted of all ages, a safety valve for a society struggling with a growing population; caring for the ill was not the basic concern. The figures from 1847 to 1973 show how, little by little, the ratio was inverted. On the whole, the number of institutions and the number of beds are in direct proportion to the population figures. But the local force of catholicism, the development of a Baroque sensibility and the more or less recent annexation of a province must be taken into account and explain certain massive implantations. On the other hand, economic prosperity was not a determining factor in the number of establishments: under the Ancien Régime—and independently of the wishes of the reigning elites from the 17th century on—hospitals were not governed by rational principles alone.