

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The History of Medicine in 100 Facts** *by Caroline Rance*

Paperback, 192 pages  
Amberley Publishing  
December 2015

This short book is well written and easily read. The style makes it primarily aimed at the general reader with an interest in medicine's long and varied history.

Using short chapters of no more than two pages to each subject, *The History of Medicine in 100 Facts* achieves its stated aim of giving concise introductions to key aspects of this history. In the main, the book is concerned with Western medical history. Beginning with prehistoric findings, the timescale followed ends with comments on contemporary work on DNA and genetics.

Because of their brevity the chapters offer no opportunity to elaborate on every "fact" but the author's erudition and breadth of medical research soon become evident. Medical jargon is eliminated as far as possible. The translation of difficult ancient names, and the provision of dates for significant individuals and findings, is very helpful.

Some few quibbles found in the narrative deserve mention. For instance, Ambroise Paré reverted to vessel ligation instead of cautery to stop bleeding before dressing wounds, allegedly saying that he dressed them but God healed them. The plug in the coned end of Laennec's stethoscope had a brass tube in it to isolate heart sounds more clearly on auscultation. The spray Lister devised in 1867 to cover his operating field with dilute carbolic warranted inclusion in recording his search for antiseptics. Lastly, there is no mention that Röntgen specifically asked Lord Kelvin to verify his discovery of X-rays. This, however, should not detract from the reader's overall enjoyment.

While the book may be aimed at a general readership, those who are medically qualified should also enjoy it, and the facts provided may encourage them to individual pursuit of some subjects in greater depth.

**Roy Miller**  
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