

BOOK REVIEW

Maladies and Medicine: Exploring Health & Healing, 1540-1740 **by Jennifer Evans & Sara Read**

Paperback, 208 pages
Pen and Sword History
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The medical history of the early-modern period, the time which is covered in this book, lends itself to descriptive and anecdotal treatment. This work aims to describe – for the ordinary reader and the medical historian – concepts and treatments of specified ailments. The authors recognise that their choice is incomplete and somewhat idiosyncratic.

One author, Jennifer Evans, is a senior lecturer in history whose research has focussed on the understanding of infertility and its treatments in early modernity. The other, Sara Read, lectures in English and has published on women's lives from 1540 to 1740. Both therefore know the period well and this book is an extension of their previous work.

The introduction gives a good overview of contemporary English medicine. It includes a description of the hierarchy of healers, the humoral pathology which underpinned treatment, and the importance of religion, astrology and gender to treatments.

The text is divided into separate sections which examine Head Complaints, Abdominal Maladies, Whole Body Ailments, Reproductive Maladies, Infertility, False Conceptions and Venereal Disease. Short chapters in each of these deal with common ailments. For example, Head Complaints deals with Migraines and Headaches, Epilepsy, Palsy, Eye Complaints and Toothache. Abdominal Maladies examines Disorderly Bowels, Jaundice and Urinary Stones.

Evans and Read describe the contemporary English understanding of the aetiology and treatment of each of the ailments. They have read widely and complement the text with well-chosen excerpts from medical texts, diaries written by patients and doctors, and advertisements for cures promoted by entrepreneurs. A few familiar images illustrate the work.

Grounded in real scholarship, *Maladies and Medicine* is nevertheless easy to read. As an excellent example of Roy Porter's "bottom up" medical history for the non-specialist, this book will inform, educate and amuse.

John MT Ford
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