

Pharmacy and professionalization in the British Empire, 1780-1970 **By Stuart Anderson**

Hardback and ebook, 381 pages.
Palgrave MacMillan, ISBN 978303078794
October 2021

In this welcome book, Anderson certainly achieves his aims: to paint a broader picture as a basis for international comparison and better understanding of pharmacy practice and professionalization in the British Empire. As he recognises, pharmacy's place in the vibrant field of colonial history has been relatively overlooked.

The book presents a top-down narrative, drawing on others' research, with no claims to in-depth historical analysis or new insights into professionalization, pharmacy or colonialism. Instead Anderson's aim is to organise relevant material into a framework for others to take further forward. He confesses an over-reliance on secondary sources, contemporary journals, and official documents, and less exploration of social history sources such as letters and diaries.

Anderson provides an impressive synthesis of extensive existing research in each of his 12 chapters, stretching from the West Indies to the Mediterranean island colonies, and from India to New Zealand. Perhaps ironically, for me, the standout chapter is number 2, the baseline history of British pharmacy development, which achieves a balance between the nuance necessary to explain the intricacies of the interplay between different factions, and the overall thread of the professional(izing) interests that created a distinctive British pharmacy model.

In subsequent chapters, the conscious focus is on "firsts", legislation, and membership institutions – and turf wars with medics. Glimpses of pioneering pharmacists provide fascinating illustrations of the sometimes stark reality of pharmacy practice.

Each chapter is supported by maps and tables that summarize governance, education, legislation and regulation milestones. More illustrations would have been welcome. The references to the complex exchange between British and indigenous systems of medicine certainly merit further enquiry.

Whether readers choose to dip into individual chapters to understand a particular geographical history, interrogate the "professionalization" theme, or follow a specific topic in colonial history, the author's meticulous weaving of existing research into valuable reference accounts will undoubtedly stimulate future study along a variety of potential trajectories.

Briony Hudson
May 2022

Published online at www.bshh.org.uk