

## Opinion

# Medicine: the Past, Present, and Future

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**SUMMARY**

Medicine had its beginnings when one savage a little more intelligent than his fellows discovered that a certain condition or a certain manipulation reduced a fracture or dislocation. The past of medicine is the incubus that weighs down and blocks the wheels of progress in the present. The medical profession is ever looking back; is ever seeking for precedent and authority; and is ever measuring the present by the rules of departed centuries. The older practice of medicine was wholly empirical, though theories were formed to suit the apparent results. The present is emphatically the age of progress, and in no department of thought or industry is it more marked than in medicine. The future of medicine will be all that its most People have ever dreamed, "when medicine will be administered with results quite as certain as are ever attained by man." There is a huge difference between past present and future medicines. Traditional is a term used for all different types of unscientific knowledge systems used within various societies ever since the dawning of mankind. The most important difference between the modern and the traditional medicine and the future medicine is the way they observe both the health and the diseases. Technologies are evolved so fast and it is a true fact that the future medicine will revolutionized the modern medicine and will be more efficient than traditional and the present medicine practices.■

**KEYWORDS** Medicine; Development; Life; Future

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**M**edicine had its beginnings when one savage a little more intelligent than his fellows discovered that a certain condition or a certain manipulation reduced a fracture or dislocation. Naturally the early practice of medicine was to a great extent empirical. No knowledge of anatomy, physiology, hygiene or bacteriology served to aid the physician in his diagnosis or prognosis of disease conditions. The sum of existing medical knowledge was the result of experience gained purely by observation of morbid conditions. Scarcely more than eight generations have marked the development of medicine as a science and it was at the beginning of this period that advanced medical thinkers began to discover the relation between medicine and the sciences of botany, zoology and chemistry. The past of medicine is the incubus that weighs down and blocks the wheels of progress in the present. The medical profession is ever looking back; is ever seeking for precedent and authority; and is ever measuring the present by the rules of departed centuries.

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## THE PAST PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

The older practice of medicine was wholly empirical, though theories were formed to suit the apparent results. Physiology was in its infancy, and chemistry was hardly known and worse still, the natural cause of diseased action had never been observed. With the development of the first two, and correct observations of the nature, cause, phenomena, and duration of certain diseases, have been evolved certain principles which now form a very good guide to a rational practice. So soon as a man shakes himself loose from the past, looking no longer for precedent and authority, but is willing to learn from the present, he is in harmony with the spirit of the age; and especially if he can make himself admit the wondrous adaptation of means to ends throughout the universe, and to which man is no exception, he will be willing to trust more to nature and be guilty of less interference with her processes.

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## THE PRESENT PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

The present is emphatically the age of progress, and in no department of thought or industry is it more marked than in medicine. If a man depends upon the knowledge of but ten years back he is far behind the age. And this progress is more marked in a lessening of the death-rate from disease than in any other direction. There is nothing new known of anatomy, and but few new discoveries in physiology, but there have been careful observations of the natural course of diseased action, and comparing these with well-established physiological facts, a new practice is rapidly being developed. If then a man desires to keep up with the advance movement in medicine it is necessary that he should free himself from the bondage of old prejudices, of old theories, and of old therapeutic dogmas, and then if conversant with the current medical literature of the day, a new practice on a rational basis will soon be developed.

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## THE FUTURE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

The future of medicine will be all that its most People have ever dreamed, "when medicine will be administered with results quite as certain as are ever attained by man." The day of specific medication is now dawning, and we have very marked evidences of its superiority over the older plans. If we had but the one class of remedies – the special sedatives – to bring forward as examples, it would be sufficient to show what we might expect in the future. But we have a score of such remedies, and others are being added, and what is most strange, some of them are found in remedies which have been employed for centuries.

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## EVOLUTION AND MEDICINE

In the field of medicine, creationists are often considered by medical doctors as hopelessly behind the times. Endlessly we hear the same old rhetoric: "Evolution is the cornerstone of modern biology."

### Medical Doctors and the Question of Suffering/Death

With savages, the weak in body and mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilized men, on the other



hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed and the sick; we institute poor laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of everyone to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands who, from a weak constitution, would formerly have succumbed to smallpox. Thus the weak members of civilized society propagate their kind.

No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but, excepting in the case of man himself, hardly anyone is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.

The aid which we feel impelled to give to the helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy, which was originally acquired as part of the social instincts, but subsequently rendered in the manner previously indicated tenderer and more widely diffused. Nor can we check our sympathy, even without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature.

### **Difference between Present, Past and Future Medicine**

Traditional medicine is a term used for all different types of unscientific knowledge systems used within various societies ever since the dawning of mankind. It is also sometimes referred to as folk medicine, mainly due to the fact that it was gradually developed over generations. The most common practices of traditional medicine include traditional African medicine, Ifa, Muti, acupuncture, traditional Korean medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, Islamic medicine, ancient Iranian

medicine, Unani, Siddha medicine, Ayurveda and herbal medicine. There are still certain regions of the world, especially in Africa and Asia where 80 percent of the population still relies on traditional medicine practices for most of their primary health needs. Traditional medicine is also used in the Western civilizations but it may sometimes lead to certain health hazards in cases when it is not used appropriately. Nowadays, modern medicine has the answer when it comes to detecting and treating a large number of different types of medical conditions, especially the ones triggered by bacteria, viruses and other sorts of infectious agents. This was not always the case, as people used to die out of diseases which are now easily curable. Those include whooping cough, diphtheria and smallpox, among others. Traditional medicine methods have been around much longer than the modern medicine and they were an important part of the recorded history. The most important difference between the modern and the traditional medicine is the way they observe both the health and the diseases. Diseases are biological conditions which are characterized as abnormalities in the function or the structure of certain organs or entire organ systems. Illnesses are completely different because they also involve certain spiritual, psychological and social aspects of an affected person. Modern medicine usually tends to ignore these aspects of a person and that is why most traditional medicine practitioners believe that the art of healing has been lost over the course of the last 100 years. This sort of dissatisfaction led to a significant increase in the number of people who start relying on traditional medicine in order to get rid of their medical problems. All of this occurs in spite of the fact that there is no scientific

evidence that traditional methods of treatment may provide one with a satisfying outcome. There are a large number of people who suffer from a lack of spiritual dimension in their lives. They are unable to connect to some greater meaning and that is one of the main reasons why they often rely on traditional medicine practitioners who may take care of all different dimensions of their lives. These people believe in the fact that one's wellness and overall health do not rely solely on a successful elimination of some disease inside the human body.

Technologies are evolved so fast and it is a true fact that the future medicine will revolutionized the modern medicine and will be more efficient than traditional and the present medicine practices.

### Acute Medicine: Past, Present, and Future

Over the past few years there has been a growing realization that there is a need for a senior medical presence in Medical Assessment and Admission units (MAUs). This has been manifest by the large number of appointments that have been made to MAUs at Consultant and other levels". A significant point in the development of acute medicine was marked on 3 July 2003. It was the day when the Specialist Training Authority recognised acute medicine as a sub-specialty of general (internal

medicine (G(I)M) and subsequently trainees have been appointed to specialist registrar programs for higher training in both G(I)M and acute medicine. There was a time when all physicians were expected to be competent in both the immediate and subsequent management of all common medical disorders, and thus were general physicians. However, fascination with the disorders of particular organ systems resulted in many clinicians developing more specific expertise and becoming "specialists". Formalization of medical training in the 1970s defined specialty training, and facilitated the development of the physician with special interest in a particular specialty. With specialization came the development of specialist societies and many physicians became more committed to their specialties than to the generalities of the acute intake. The creation of specialties within medicine should have raised concerns about the ability of specialists in one specialty to deliver the best care to patients suffering from the acute disorders of another specialty, but as the physicians involved in the acute intake practiced general medicine as well as their specialty, it was assumed that acute medical care in all situations could still be delivered by all physicians. Acute medicine thus remained part of G(I)M and the Royal Colleges have always emphasized the importance of G(I)M in this regard.■

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

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