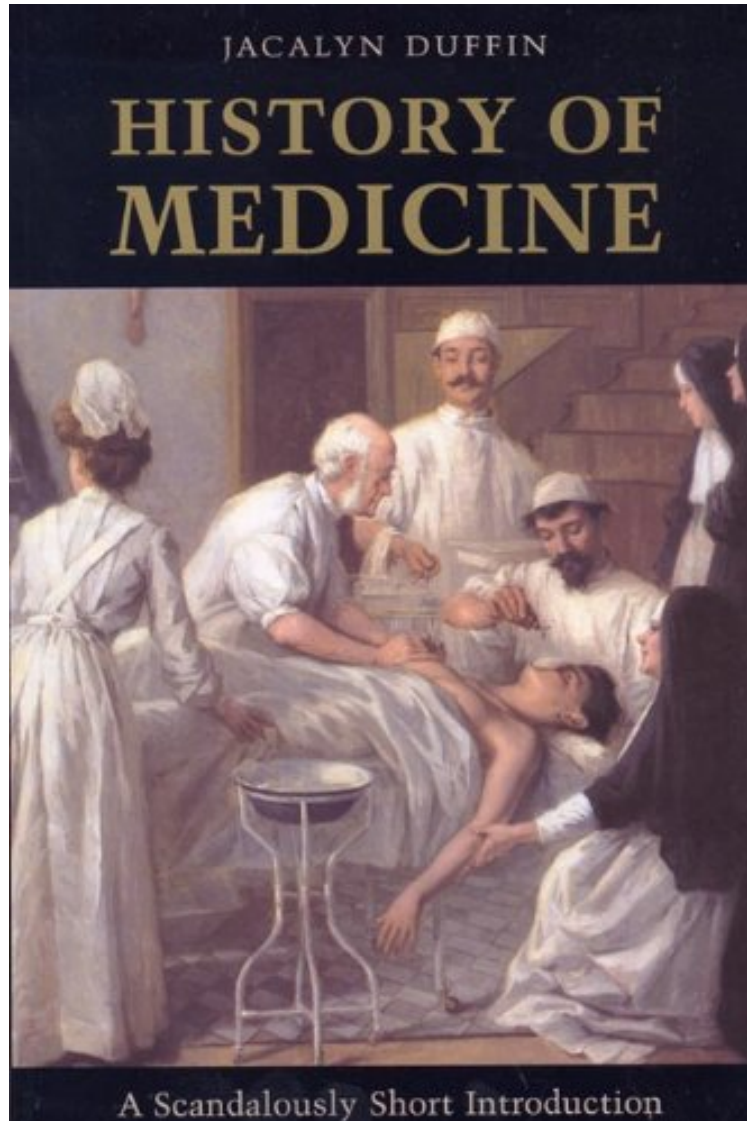


[Ebook free] History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction

## History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction

*Jacalyn Duffin*

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**Jacalyn Duffin : History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I would highly recommend this bookBy Classical Music LoverThis book is written in a very simple and organized style. One does not have to be in the medical field to understand the material. Duffin explains the history of medicine from an objective and neutral perspective, excluding, in my opinion, the disappointing and biased chapter on Global Health (chapter 15), in which she makes claims pertaining to "global

warming/climate change", "sedentary lifestyles/obesity" and "dangers of second-hand smoke" without substantiating them. Nonetheless, overall, this book is a fascinating look into how the medical field evolved from antiquity all the way to today with interesting tidbits and trivia included. I would highly recommend this book. 54 of 55 people found the following review helpful. Wondering where the Canadian Health Care System is Headed? By Dr. Barry J Goldlist Why would anybody other than a medical historian (or an aging doctor such as myself) be interested in a book on the history of medicine? Jacalyn Duffin gives us all the answer in the final chapter of this book (How to Research a Question in Medical History) when she writes: "No medical subject - be it a person, a practice, an institution, a technology, or an idea - can be fully explored without also studying its political, social, economic, and cultural environment." In this introductory text (compiled from medical student lectures at Queen's University) one gets a clear view of how medicine reflects society, and how health care providers are influenced by non-medical factors in society at large. Although this is not a textbook of Canadian medical history, it is written by a Canadian for a Canadian audience. This is particularly valuable as many of us who are wondering where the Canadian health care system is heading, can get at least an overview from this text of how our current system developed. The text is organized by topic (e.g. History of Anatomy) rather than as a continuous chronology. This makes the reading much simpler for a relatively uninformed reader, as only one concept at a time is explored. As well, chapters can be read in any order, depending on the reader's particular interests. The exceptional nature of this book is probably based on the relatively rare characteristics of the author: she is a practicing physician (haematologist) as well as a formally trained historian. As a result the book covers both important historical trends as well as the difficulties facing individual practitioners as they try and alleviate human suffering. My favourite chapter was entitled "Science of Suffering: History of Pathology." The reader is given a clear understanding of how the concept of 'disease' developed, and both the strengths and weaknesses of this diagnostic labelling. The chapter on blood (Why is Blood Special?) literally 'pulses' with excitement and enthusiasm, obviously reflecting the author's particular interests as well as the historical importance of the topic. Throughout this text, there is a refreshing absence of both medical jargon and dense academic prose, making reading the book an enjoyable process. My one quibble is that Professor Duffin's elegant descriptions of the importance of a population approach to health fails to ask one question that always intrigues me. Does the focus on a population health approach have within it the inevitable potential to put differential values on human life? Was the eugenics movement a result of a 'population health' perspective? In Canada, with universal medicare and no private practice option (as occurs in the United Kingdom), might someone with an 'unimportant' disease eventually be 'uncovered' by medicare? Does focusing on the greater good inevitably result in inhumane or unfair treatment to some? Perhaps a topic for a second edition. So once again who should read this book? Clearly it is a must read for medical students and doctors interested in medical history. However, it would be a shame to limit this fine text to that small audience. This book can be enjoyed by anybody interested in understanding health care or who is just interested in medical history. It deserves a wide audience.

Jacalyn Duffin's *History of Medicine* provides a brief survey of the history of Western medicine with reference to recent scholarly literature and current issues in health care. Organized conceptually around the major fields of medical endeavour - anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology, surgery, obstetrics, psychiatry, pediatrics, and family medicine - this book is an accessible overview of medical history as a vibrant component of social, intellectual, and cultural history, and as a research discipline in its own right. Each chapter begins in antiquity and ends in the twentieth century. Throughout, Duffin shows that alternative interpretations can be found for most elements of our past and that topics of interest can go well beyond 'great men' and 'great discoveries' to include ideas, diseases, patients, institutions, and great mistakes. This approach does not mean that the 'great men' (and women) are neglected; rather they appear in context. Medical disasters such as chloramphenicol and thalidomide, are covered along with the triumphs, and examples from Canada's past, largely ignored in other medical histories, are included. A chapter on methodology, suggestions for further reading with special attention to Canadian sources, and a careful index make it possible to research a specific event or historical debate, or to satisfy a more general curiosity. By presenting the material in a structure that resonates with the broad outlines of medical training, and by focusing on the questions asked most often, this text is a relevant guide for students to the history of the profession they are about to embrace, and for those who would teach them, be they physicians or historians. Duffin's clear and entertaining prose and the many illustrations will help to demystify medicine for general readers and for students in other domains, such as history, philosophy, and sociology.

'The first readers of this *History of Medicine* should be medical students. As the director of a history of medicine program I welcome this book, for at last I have a good text book to recommend ... It should be bought by, or better still, presented to each Canadian medical student as a reward for acceptance into medical school.' (Peter Warren *Canadian Medical Association Journal*) 'The facts she's unearthed are often fascinating and her prose is lively and accessible, guaranteeing interesting reading even for those on the receiving end of the stethoscope.' (Debby Waldman Quill and Quire) About the Author Jacalyn Duffin is a haematologist and historian who is Professor in the Hannah

Chair of the History of Medicine at Queen's University.