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# Comparison Of Medieval Medicine And Modern Times Medicine

The principles of medicine have evolved tremendously since medieval times. Although medieval medicine was the start of medical practices for various treatments, modern times practice the same treatments but in a much safer fashion. I am going to be discussing the start of medieval medicine, medieval practices that were deemed as insane, and breaking down how those same practices have become safer for the patient. Medical procedures and remedies need to be understood as to why they are used but they cannot do more harm than good to a sick patient.

First, I am going to discuss the beginning of medieval medicine. When the Roman Empire fell it caused Europe to fall into what is to be considered the early middle ages or the dark ages. This fall in the empire caused for much practices and rituals to fall on complete speculation. A trained doctor per say was not someone to be found in this time period. Many of the European people would go see someone they referred to as a, "Local Wise Woman" (Mascorro). These women practiced the prescribing of herbs and medicine with the guidelines that was passed down to them from generation to generation. Their idea if healing often dealt with means of magic. If a person needed surgery they were sent to an individual referred to many times in my research as, "the butcher surgeon." William of Saliceto is one man that stands out as an actual qualified surgeon during medieval times. William was among a group of people to help set up a school to teach people how to perform surgery and procedures of many different degrees. A skilled medieval surgeon was someone who would work on facial ulcers, removal of teeth, cataracts, and even removal of bladder stones. The reason these surgeons were referred to as, "butcher" was because of the fact that they would just cut in to someone without the knowledge of causing an infection by doing this in an unsanitary way. Though they only possessed a certain level of skill many of them practiced with Chritian beliefs and believed many of the patients could just be healed with prayer.

As a result of unqualified people being deemed doctors or healers of the sick many practices were barbaric to say the least. One procedure that was carried out in medieval times was the relief of a headache. Trepanation was practiced when someone would complain of an extreme headache. The doctor would drill a hole straight into the patient's head, without any anesthesia, and this was believed to get rid of the evil spirits causing the person such immense pain. Secondly, just as we see in today's society, cataracts were seen back in medieval times. The removal of such an ailment was relieved in a completely different manner. Practitioners would strap the patient down to a chair, and use a knife to cut into the cornea. After this step was complete they would suck the cataract straight out of the person's eye with a special needle made with only the materials they had laying around. Lastly, doctors would perform a very painful procedure to treat illnesses such as syphilis, bladder stones, and severe urinary tract infections causing the person to not be able to void on their own. The familiar word used to describe this painful procedure is what we all know as, catheterization. The act of catheterization is the same as in today's world but the material used was completely different. A catheter in medieval times was made solely out of metal. Many different times of metals were used as long as they were malleable and could be shaped in a curve like shape to match the anatomy of a human. Examples of the types of metals used were, copper, gold, and lead (Horden). It goes without saying that doctors of medieval medicine literally had to work with

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what they were given. A huge downfall to these practices is infection. Infection was the number one killer of the people alive during this time. The surgeons or wise women did not have the proper materials to clean and sterilize tools used to complete these procedures. So even though they thought they were treating the patient, in all reality they would cause an infection that would go untreated due to them not having the proper medications to fix the bigger issue created.

Now I would like to compare some of those same practices done back then to what is used today and show how much modern times has changed in the world of medicine. Firstly, all surgeons are trained at an accredited school and become experts in the art of medicine. Also, since medieval medicine has become the invention of antibiotics. Unfortunately, many people of medieval times lost their lives to the infection because, as stated above, antibiotics were not invented in their time. So not only would they have to recover from the procedure done, they would have to depend on their now weakened immune system to heal them from the infection contracted. Along with highly qualified surgeons and proper medication we have come a long way in the way certain procedures are completed to help the patient. For example, the act of catheterization is still used just as it was back then but the materials used have completely changed. In today's society metallic catheters are nowhere to be found, instead are the use of sterile catheter kits. One of the kits used is the Foley catheter it comes in a one time use package all completely sterile and untouched with any outside bacteria. The nurse completing the task has been trained on how to remain sterile so that no outside bacteria gets into the patient and causes an infection. Anesthesia has also been invented since the medieval medicine practices. It is hard to believe that all of those extremely painful practices were done with absolutely zero anesthesia or pain killers. That takes the phrase, "Just grin and bear it" to a whole new meaning.

In closing, I think that without the practice of medieval medicine, modern medicine would not be where it is today. The same procedures are used as they were back then but they are done in the proper setting and with safer tools. Although medieval medicine is often thought of as crazy or barbaric, what people fail to realize is in modern science we practice nearly the same medicine. We just have the vast and every day advancing world of technology on our side.