The Western Tradition
Ancient Greece and Rome

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In This Session…

• Discuss the evolving role of medical practice throughout history and compare with the emerging paradigms of health within the 21st century.
• Develop an awareness of the interrelationships among separate healing paradigms and their common ground.
• Explain the history and understandings of health and disease according to different cultural and historical frameworks.
• Understand the development of the scientific method and its increasing importance in Western medicine as well as its influence on other medical system paradigms.
• Identify how the changing ideas and perspectives about health over time relate to the present landscape of natural medicine in Australia and around the world.
Prehistory vs History

• **Prehistory**: The period of time before written records.

• **History**: The study of the human past through written records.
Three points to consider for assessment

• What was the cause of disease in ancient Greece and Rome?
• What traditions of ancient Greek and Roman have survived today?
• What specific herbs and medications were used?
Greece

- This is the Bronze Age Greek civilisation, which was already flourishing in Crete by 3,000 BC. The indigenous people of Greece are known as Pelasgians or Protogreeks and their language was different to Classical Greek.
Similarly, the Minoans are needing a mention because the roots of natural medicine can be seen here.

Knossos Palace reconstruction
Major palaces in Crete are in Knossos (largest), Phaestos, Malia, Zakros and Gournia, with many more smaller settlements throughout the island.

Knossos Palace
The Minoans

- Minoan art reveals a society of joyous disposition, in touch with their environment, and in awe of the logical order of the natural world.

Knossos Palace – “Queen’s Room”
The Minoans

- Society
- Economy
- Trade
- Arts

Knossos Palace – Throne room
The Minoans

- Religion

Three snake goddess figurines from Crete
The Minoans

- Minoan Medicine
- Minoan medicine was interwoven with religion and the recurring symbol of the snake associated with healing and medicine that is seen worldwide is also evident in Cretan goddesses.

Bull leaping fresco from the Knossos Palace
For Further Investigation

- **Mesopotamia:**
  - 1916 film: “Intolerance” – Silent classic: Babylon section of film focusses on Belshazzar
  - 1962 film: “War Gods of Babylon” – Italian epic film loosely based on Sardanapalus
  - 1963 film: “I am Semiramis” – Story of Queen Semiramis (~800 BC)
  - 2001 documentary: “Secrets of Ancient Empires: The First Civilizations”

- **Egypt:**
  - 1954 film: “The Egyptian” – Story of Sinuhe the physician in the 18th Dynasty
  - 1955 film: “Land of the Pharaohs” – Romanticised film about ancient Egypt
  - 1961 film: “Nefertiti, Queen of the Nile” – Life of Nefertiti, famous queen
  - 1963 film: “Cleopatra” – Notoriously expensive film flop about Cleopatra
  - 2003 documentary: “Egypt: Land of Mummies” – Excellent!

- **Aegean Civilisation:**
  - 1960 film: “Minotaur the Wild Beast of Crete” – Italian epic film loosely based on Theseus
  - 1961 film: “Atlantis, the Lost Continent” – Fanciful interpretation of the Atlantis legend
  - 2000 documentary: “Empires - The Greeks Crucible of Civilization” – very good
For Further Investigation

- Mesopotamia:
  - http://www.indiana.edu/~ancmed/meso.HTM - Mesopotamian medicine
  - http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/nemythology/a/mesopotamiarel.htm - Mesopotamian religion
- Egypt:
  - http://www.touregypt.net/ehistory.htm - Egyptian history
  - http://historylink101.net/egypt_1/religion.htm - Egyptian religion
  - http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ancient_egyptian_medicine.htm - Egyptian medicine
  - http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/ - Egyptian culture
  - http://www.egyptianmyths.net/ - Egyptian mythology
  - http://www.touregypt.net/edwinsmithsurgical.htm - Edwin-Smith Papyrus
- Aegean Civilisation:
  - http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/episodes/sinking-atlantis/90/ - Full Minoans documentary online
  - http://heritage-key.com/world/legend-atlantis - Atlantis legend
Achilles tending Patroclus’ wounds in a scene on Greek pottery that illustrates an episode from —The Iliad II
Troy
Trojan War

- Trojan Horse
Cause of Disease

- Seasons
- Gods
Do not mess with the Gods

- 12 Olympian or 'great gods' and myriad of lesser gods, divinities, demigods, nymphs, etc.
- Zeus: Supreme deity
- Athena: Goddess of wisdom
- Apollo: God of sun, arts, medicine
- Aphrodite: Goddess of beauty, love
- Hades: God of the underworld
- Hermes: God of trade, communication
- Hera: Goddess of marriage
- Ares: God of war
- Artemis: Goddess of moon
- Poseidon: God of sea
- Hephaestus: God of technology
- Dionysus: God of wine, theatre
Gods of Healing
Temples of Healing

- Priests worked together with lay doctors and a supernatural approach was combined with an empirical approach (dietary, herbal, surgical) to bring about healing.
Baths

- Balneotherapy is healing through bathing in thermal springs or water containing medicinal components.
- Ancient Greeks knew about the healing properties of certain thermal springs from prehistoric times. Herodotus (484-410 BC) describes mineral spring waters that had a beneficial effect on the human body.
- Bathing in thermal waters took place in the Asclepieia under the supervision of priests or physicians.
Pre-Hippocratic Medicine

• By the sixth century B.C., four basic elements had become generally accepted as the components of all substances: water, earth, fire, and air, each of which had its corresponding characteristic - wet, dry, hot, cold. This doctrine of the four elements and their qualities (later projected into the four humours) continued to affect medical theory for many centuries, even into recent times.

• Humans were fallen gods eventually capable of returning to divinity, for although the body decayed the soul was continually reborn, even in animals
Democritus

- Democritus and Leucippus later in the fifth century BC advanced the fully developed theory that all matter is made up of atoms of different size, weight, shape, and position.
- All animate and inanimate objects were originally created by the collisions and combinations of atoms.
Hippocrates

• Hippocrates of Cos or (≈460 BC – ≈370 BC) was a physician during the Golden Age of Pericles. Little is known about him, and his writings have commingled with the writings of his students and followers.
Aristotle

- Aristotle (384-322 BC), son of a physician and pupil of Plato, also had profound influence on later medicine, especially among the Arabic authors.
Alexander

• The most important place of medical thought and practice was the great center of Greek learning at Alexandria, founded in 331 BC by Alexander the Great and governed by a dynasty stemming from his general Ptolemy.
Women

• The chief medical activities of women were as midwives, but there were also skilful female doctors practicing secretly or openly. Many of the women in medicine were the wives or daughters of lower-order wound surgeons.
Doctrine of Signatures

- Anacardium, hard and soft
- Eyebright, used for eye infections
- Hedge woundwort, thought to have antiseptic qualities
- Liverwort, either Marchantiophyta or Hepatica - used to treat the liver
- Lungwort - used for pulmonary infections
- Spleenwort, Asplenium - used to treat the spleen
- Toothwort, Dentaria - used for tooth ailments
- Pulsatilla, Ginseng etc
Galen

- The origins of modern medicine
- 131 CE
- Taking Hippocrates’ notions of the humors and pathology, Galen incorporated the anatomical knowledge of noted Alexandrians such as Herophilus of Chalcedon (335-280 B.C.E.). A supporter of observation and reasoning, he was one of the first experimental physiologists, researching the function of the kidneys and the spinal cord in controlled experiments.
Balancing the Elements
Fall of the Byzantine Empire

KEY:
- Byzantine Empire in Purple
- Epirus: Light Blue
- Latin States: Pink/Red
- Cilicia: Blue

References

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