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The Story of Modern Medicine

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The knowledge and practice of medicine goes as far as Hippocrates (circa 460-370BC) when a Greek born physician Hippocrate earned respect and honor for the revolution he initiated towards the practice of medicine based on scientific facts and reasoning on which the diseases are based. He is also known as the father of medicine since he established the first medical school in the western world in the era before Christ. In the ancient cultures, people believed that diseases came out from supernatural causes such as ghosts, demons and witchcraft as curses due to wrong deeds in life. They also believed that every living soul contained a mixture of 4 elements -- earth, fire, air, and water -- together called "humours". These humours in the body consisted of black bile, phlegm, yellow bile and blood and their sickness began when one of these constituents was out of place. The Emergence of Hippocratic Medicine Early evidence of Greek medicine, later supported by Romans and ancient Egyptians, shows they realized that any illness in the body can be scientifically linked to internal derangement and the remedies should be based on a proper diagnosis. A further study of literature during the Hippocratic

era shows that Hippocrate routinely tasted his patient's urine, sampled their pus and earwax, and smelled their excreta before establishing a diagnosis and rendering treatment accordingly. Medicine and Surgery in Ancient Rome Early Romans (Galen 130-200AD) had a religious yet fundamental understanding of medicine with knowledge from the Greeks, Egyptians and Hindus. Their practice of medicine involved combination of physical tools and holistic medicine. Ancient Roman medicine was split into different specialties with strong emphasis on surgery to the wounded soldiers from the 15 years of civil war following the assassination of Julius Ceasar. The pain killers and sedatives were derived from plants opium and scopolamine. The soldiers' wounds were being washed with acetum and listers' carbolic acid in 1860; this is still known in 21st century as Listerine. Victorian Advances in Medicine During 18th and 19th Centuries Human medicine advanced tremendously in the 18th and 19th century due to advanced techniques, precise medical equipments such as anaesthesia in 1846, ophthalmology in 1851, antiseptics in 1865, pasteurization in 1862, the

discovery of TB bacilli in 1882, cholera in 1883, and rabies in 1885. Most Common Methods of Treatment in 18th and 19th Centuries

- 1 Phlebotomy. This was the remedy for minor or major illnesses with the belief that it released 'bad blood' from the body.
- 2 Blistering. This technique was used to treat arthritis, fever, and persistent pain with the belief that being blistered caused a patient to focus on new pain and forget his past pain and suffering.
- 3 Plastering. Plasters and poultices were both popular remedies for a variety of ailments. Plaster was made from a variety of ingredients including cow manure and was applied to the chest for a chest cold or pain. Poultices were made from bread, milk, herbs and linseed oils and were applied to treat cuts and wounds on the body.
- 4 Amputation. This surgical removal of arms and legs was being performed without anaesthesia until 1840.
- 5 Purging, puking and sweating. Dosing a person with purgatives to expel poison from the body as well as giving emetics was a common practice for treatment of poisoning. Sweating was a remedy for high fever and patients were kept warmly

dressed during fever.

Practice of Medicine in the 20th and 21st Century

The practice of medicine in the 20th and 21st centuries saw very advanced changes due to new technologies and advances in each field of medicine. Doctors changed almost beyond recognition during the 20th century. In the early years your doctor was usually a man, with a limited range of medicines and techniques. By the end of the century doctors were as likely to be women as men, with a whole arsenal of pills and treatments to help make you better. At the beginning of the century local doctors still visited the sick in their homes, usually carrying their sturdy Gladstone bag. Doctors could do little to cure disease, although they had learned some ways of preventing it, and some new techniques of caring for patients. The modernisation of medicine changed the role of the doctor. 60% of new doctors are now women. Familiar illnesses, previously dangerous, can often be treated by a course of pills. Many other diseases now call for the use of expensive technology so, by the end of the century, most medicine was delivered in hospitals

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