

Lesson 3: History of Modern Medicine

Note: The history of biology covers the early history of medicine.

Review: What is a miracle? Medicine? Preventative medicine?

Introduction

What is a professional?

Ans. An expert, who gets paid.

What is the opposite of a professional?

Ans. An amateur, who perhaps does it as a hobby on the side and does not get paid.

What is a profession?

Ans. A line of work, a career choice.

Traditionally, a **profession** is an altruistic service—done not for money, but for the good of mankind.

Three traditional professions, each with a qualifying exam:

- (1) Law (bar exam)
- (2) Medicine (board exam)
- (3) Theology (ordination)

To prepare, students would often attach themselves to a local professional to “read law” etc. (cf. apprenticeship).

Changes in Medicine

John Steele Gordon, “A Short History of American Medical Insurance,” *Imprimis* 47 (September 2018).

Introduction: Over 90% of the medicine practiced today did not exist in 1950. Modern medicine is *really* modern.

1. Professional Schools

German model of higher education.

Example: First dental school in the world opened in Baltimore (1839).

2. State Licensure – against quackery

1850 – over 40,000 self-proclaimed physicians, more per capita than 1970 in the US

Alternative medicine still exists (e.g. homeopathy), but is not endorsed.

Possible exception: chiropractors?

3. Teams of Specialists with large data banks – division of labor (Adam Smith)

Illus. Two brothers start Mayo Clinic (Rochester, MN)

Result: Less house calls, less general physicians (gives rise to nurse practitioners today?)

4. Higher Costs

1930: 3.5% GDP

2015: 15% GDP

1980s alone: 117% increase (cf. 43% general inflation)

Why?

Gordon’s article acknowledges that hospitals are expensive to run [hence, the charities in the names?].

Hospitals actually originated and support the insurance system:

Medical insurance begins as hospital prepayment plans around 1930.

True insurance (major medical) did not replace the original plans, but supplemented them (1950s).

Two Problems:

Coverage only for *in-hospital* expenses → unnecessary stays.

Lack of competition, because insurance paid hospitals, not patients, who would shop around

Added Factors:

Employer-paid health insurance (1940s)

Government-funded socialized medicine (1960s Great Society – Medicare, Medicaid)

Increased malpractice insurance, due to increased lawsuit settlements—but when is enough?

What happens when the money supply increases?

Inflation. Medical costs rise.

5. Pharmaceutical Companies

Germ Theory of Disease – fueled sanitation and the search for new medicines

e.g. 1922 – Michigan’s education law bringing private schools under sanitation laws

e.g. rabies (1885), whooping cough, diphtheria (cf. movie *Togo* about the serum dog transit to Nome)

Pasteurization is credited with reducing mortality rates among infants (under one year old):

1891 125 died out of 1000

1925 15 died out of 1000

This search is good—in general, God endorses medicine:

“...but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” (1 Timothy 5:23).

Sum: Medicine today is big business (one sixth of the economy).

When money is involved, the love of money is hard to resist and leads to harm (1 Tim. 6:10).

Application

How much is medicine today a profession, in the traditional sense?

What should we think about the medical profession?

We should expect to pay for medical services, for doctors are worthy of payment (Mt. 10:10).

In motivation, doctors and nurses should act in love, for the good of a neighbor and the glory of God.

We should encourage youth to enter medicine, for it is a service (cf. Mt. 20:28).

We should value our souls over our bodies, and our God over ourselves (cf. Luther quote below on education).

The greatest profession is still the ministry of the gospel.

Martin Luther, *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* (1530)

And do not be disturbed because the run-of-the-mill miser despises learning so deeply and says,

“Ha, if my son can read and write German and do arithmetic, that is enough.

I am going to make a businessman out of him.”

They will soon quiet down;

indeed, they will be glad to dig twenty feet into the earth with their bare hands just to get a scholar.

For if preaching and law should fail, the businessman will not be a businessman for long;

that I know for sure.

We theologians and jurists must remain or everything else will go down to destruction with us;

you can be sure of that.

When the theologians disappear, God’s word also disappears,

and nothing but heathen remain, indeed, nothing but devils.

When the jurists disappear, then the law disappears, and peace with it;

and nothing but robbery, murder, crime, and violence remain, indeed, nothing but wild beasts.

But what earnings and profits the businessman will have when peace is gone,

I shall let his ledger tell him;

and what good all his wealth will do him when the preaching comes to an end,

his conscience will surely show him.