The History of Medicine

On Friday afternoons this autumn, there will be six illustrated talks and discussions looking at the development of medicine. The talks will as far as possible be self-contained so that each can be enjoyed in its own right.

In the 1970s Professor Thomas McKeown argued that “improvements in health or longevity have little to do with developments in modern medicine”. During the course, we will be examining that thesis and, where possible, we will encourage discussion on topics with ethical and moral dimension.

The talks detailed below will be held on the following dates in the training room of The Gap Community Centre Oakwood Road, Warwick CV34 5TD and start at 2.15pm. This is an open group and all members are welcome. You can contact me at johnjeanmorgan@greenbee.net or on 881876, but please feel free to turn up on the day. There is a charge of £1.00 to cover the room cost.

Oct 6  Introduction and Early Medical Traditions

An introduction to the course, introducing McKeown’s ideas as we look at the evidence of improvement in UK health since 1750.

We will go on to look at the evidence of medicine in prehistoric societies and discuss Chinese, Indian, Babylonian and Egyptian medical practice.

Oct 20  Medicine before 1750

Starting with Greek theories of health we will trace how evidence based medicine developed first in the Islamic world and later in Renaissance Europe. The European Age of Enlightenment rang the death knell of the Greek theory of humours.

Nov 10  Scientific medicine 1750 – 1900 and Georgian spa treatments and hydrotherapy.

How science became the foundation for disease prevention, medical technology, and pharmaceuticals in the nineteenth century.

Plus, of especial local interest, a look at the theories behind Spa and hydrotherapy treatments.

Nov 17  Epidemiology and Mental health

Epidemiology (the study of the patterns, causes, and effects of health and disease conditions) is arguably the science that has improved health more than any other branch of medicine. It is the cornerstone of public health, and shapes policy decisions and evidence-based practice by identifying risk factors for disease and targets for preventive healthcare.

A history of mental health, a discussion about the struggle to recognise types of behaviour and emotional states as a health issue.

Nov 24  Medicine in the twentieth century

Bringing the history of medicine up to date

Dec 1  Modern techniques and future medicine

Introduction to potential new treatments, discussion on how these are evaluated, and the moral/ethical problems that may arise.