THE INFLUENCE OF VENEREAL DISEASE ON PRACTITIONER-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP IN EARLY MODERN LONDON

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ABSTRACT
This project examines how the diagnosis of venereal disease (VD) affected the doctor-patient relationship in early-modern London. Most medical consults during this period were a collaboration between practitioners and patients, in which the latter by offering advice. This project shows a significant portion of the examples from Daniel Turner’s The Secret of Venerable Disease and Fever of V.S., and argues that some preventative and treatment practices were far from effective.

METHODS
Two main sources are examined for this article: advertisements and case histories. The former consist of three collections from the British Library, and the latter provide comprehensive VD cases, from how the patients were before consulting Turner, how they progressed during the encounter, and their post-treatment status. Therefore, these accounts from Turner and several other authors are a rich source for healer-sufferer interactions, and thus the main focus of this study.

RESULTS
Shameful diseases have always complicated interactions between healers and sufferers. Even with the explosion of medical knowledge and well-established medical authority of doctors today, we still see conflicts in diagnosis and treatment for stigmatizing illnesses such as obesity or addiction. Furthermore, these illnesses still promote the development of niche markets for easy and fast alternatives, visible from the plethora of TV commercials and billboards for diet pills we see every day.

CONCLUSIONS
In contrast to a cordial relationship in which healers and patients cooperated in diagnosis and treatment in non-VD ailments, the two sides were constantly in conflict in VD. First, sufferers tried to conceal the sexual nature of their disease or reject the diagnosis entirely. Some doctors chose to go with the flow. John Douglas “never [did]任 with patients about names, but [let] them always to call their disease what they pleased.” Other practitioners, tricked or forced patients into admitting/accepting they had VD. For example, one morning when the patient was distracted, Turner “[took] hold of the [patient’s] penis, that [the patient] had before used very industriously to conceal,” and found genital secretions which was irrefutable evidence for VD, and hence the patient broke down and told the truth. Further conflict ensued when treatment did not meet expectations. Doctors blamed patients for non-compliance or for consulting previous ineffective healers. The advertisements show that patients in 17th-century London had a wealth of potential healers from whom to choose, many of whom specialized in treating VD. Patients were customers, some described as [changing] his Physician as often as his Shirt.” The medical encounter in VD was a tug-of-war from beginning to end, quite different from that in other diseases.

BACKGROUND
Historians have demonstrated that medical practice in 17th-century London was built upon a marketplace model. Healers of all types competed with each other for customers, and patients picked and chose amongst practitioners. Not only was medical knowledge exclusive to doctors; medical consults were a collaborative process between healer and sufferer.

This project examines how well this model of a patient-centered medical marketplace explains the doctor-patient encounter in VD, in the 17th-century London, when almost any post-genital ailment might be VD was an acute illness that was painful and extremely visible, as well as very stigmatizing, since it was associated with illicit sexual activity.

The image of a 17th-century advertisement showing a doctor in his shop giving a patient a cordial for syphilis.

“A Cure to the Famine:..." Caveat Pretended...Venus Unveil'd..." A soft infallible, and Sure, Cheap, Secret, Safe, and Speedy Cure for a Clap.

Running of the Reins, on the French-Pox: Are Privately and Certainly Cured, by a Very Methodical and Certain Form, the Curing of all NEWER and More Ancient Scrofulous Infections, and all Other Venereal Diseases: Which Cure is Done by a Most Infallible Method of..." A fine 17th-century health advertisement.

"A most infallible, and Sure, Cheap, Secret, Safe, and Speedy Cure for..." A Caveat to the Famine:..." Caveat Pretended...Venus Unveil'd..." A soft infallible, and Sure, Cheap, Secret, Safe, and Speedy Cure for a Clap.

"A very methodical, and certain form, the curing of all newer and more ancient scrofulous infections, and all other venereal diseases: which cure is done by a most infallible method of..." An advertisement from the British Library.

"A soft infallible, and Sure, Cheap, Secret, Safe, and Speedy Cure for a Clap. Any Heat of Urine, Tricking Pate in making Water, Mouse Upping from the YARD." This advertisement is from the British Library.

"A Caveat to the Famine:..." A Caveat to the Famine:..." Caveat Pretended...Venus Unveil'd..." This advertisement is from the British Library.

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