

Book Reviews

Nils Hansson and Jonatan Wistrand, eds, *Explorations in Baltic Medical History, 1850–2015*. Rochester Studies in Medical History (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019). ISBN: 9781580469401 (HB). 10 B&W illustrations. 270pp.

When one considers histories of medicine, those of Anglo-Saxon and western European countries easily dominate our collective knowledge. *Explorations in Baltic Medical History, 1850–2015* is a wonderfully refreshing change to this trend, offering histories of medicine in Baltic and Scandinavian areas from the mid-nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century. The result of this effort is a collaborative anthology that promises to transgress national boundaries of Baltic history of medicine.

When preparing an introductory lecture for first year medical students at Lund University, Sweden, the editors of this book, Nils Hansson and Jonatan Wistrand, realised there was a lack of research in history of medicine and dissemination of contemporary medical knowledge in the Baltic region.

Each chapter in the book is a paper presented at a three-day symposium held at Lund University in 2014, which the editors were confident would help fill this gap in historiography. The ten chapters comprise contributions from physicians, geographers, ethnologists, and literary scholars. They outline case studies in Baltic and Scandinavian histories of medicine that show how new devices, therapies, and medical knowledge were developed but were not limited to national borders. Indeed, throughout the work there is a strong focus on transnational medicine—as author of the Preface, Heiner Fangerau rightly asserts: ‘Medicine as a science and practice has always transgressed borders; the same is true for the historiography of medicine’ (p. x). The aim of the book was not only to improve understanding of histories of medicine in the region, but also to challenge national paradigms. It certainly achieves this by offering a plethora of different subjects to not only whet the appetite of the reader, but in turn generate new research in a relatively understudied area.

With contributions relevant to histories of physiotherapy, gynaecology, feminist history, social history of medicine, biography, history of psychiatric medicine, anatomy, nephrology, philosophy of medicine, military history, epidemiology, and literary history the book

promises a wide readership.

The strengths of this book include its diverse array of subjects and its layout. The book is divided into two sections: the first titled ‘Transfers of Medical Knowledge Across the Baltic Sea’, which offers five papers on how medical knowledge was disseminated and argued among contemporary medical hegemony in the area. They include the advent of gym equipment used in nineteenth-century physiotherapy (or medical gymnastics as it was referred to at the time); the history and contemporary controversy surrounding gynaecological massage; medicine in Stettin, Germany from 1800 to 1945—the history of which was nowhere to be found until now; arguments concerning contagion and vaccination during the 1932 smallpox epidemic in Malmö, Sweden; and a history of the temperance movement (advocating abstinence from alcohol), in pre-independent Estonia.

The second section of the book titled ‘Bridging the Baltic Comparative Studies’ offers another five papers which focus on biography and case study, while maintaining the central theme of movement and sharing of medical knowledge in the Scandinavian and Baltic areas. These papers include a professional biography of Paul Ehrlich and his networking methods among German-Scandinavian scientists at the turn of the twentieth century; an examination of Emil Kraepelin of Dorpat University, Estonia, and his work on melancholia in the late nineteenth century; a study of narratives, poems, and personal diaries from sanatoria in the early twentieth century, arguing the emergence of pathography—the study of the experience of illness on the individual; an analysis of Swedish, Estonian, and German approaches to bio-banking—that is, the storage of human tissue; and finally, a case study of patient interactions within the haemodialysis units in the capitals of Latvia and Sweden, Riga and Stockholm.

Another strength of this book is how it engages the reader. Even if chapters are outside the field of expertise of readers, they won’t be disappointed. With its impressive layout, each chapter offers something different and informative with a well-balanced analysis of material, without any evident political or ethical bias. The book is an excellent example of how to deliver on different perspectives of history of medicine, without stooping to presentism.

Indeed, this book should be included in every recommended-reading list for university subjects relating to the history of medicine and philosophy of medicine, because every paper in the book promotes discussion and offers scope for further research in its respective area, rendering it a must-read for all undergraduate, postgraduate, and

professional researchers.

Overall, this book not only has an appeal to scholars in many areas in the history of medicine, but also to the lay person. As illness itself does not discriminate, neither does an interest in the history of illnesses and their treatment. The writing style in this work is such that it won't alienate the non-academic, yet it doesn't patronise the reader either. A certain amount of historical knowledge is assumed by the authors, while those unfamiliar with Scandinavian and Baltic history will leave this book with a new-found appreciation of its history, and of the stories of those scientists, medical practitioners, and patients who shaped that history.

Within this publication, there is a good balance of photographic material and text. Each chapter is well documented and the book is indexed, facilitating easy follow-up of sources and content. I highly recommend this book to students and professional historians alike.

ANGELINE BRASIER
MELBOURNE

Anna Rogers, With Them Through Hell: New Zealand Medical Services in the First World War (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2018). ISBN: 978-0-9951001-9-0 (HB). B&W illustrations. 494pp.

When first setting eyes on this beautifully produced book, the reader is drawn to open and turn its pages and begin looking and reading. The well-illustrated and substantial volume is about New Zealand medical services during the First World War and is part of the impressive series of publications from New Zealand's First World War Centenary History Programme. The careful and restrained use of the colour red on the book's cover and throughout is evocative of the content and respectful of the people being written about. The author and publishers are to be congratulated on the calibre of the publication.

The book is in four parts and is the first comprehensive study of the medical service since Andrew Carbery's account *The New Zealand Medical Service in the Great War, 1914–1918* (1924). Medical care for the men was intended to be from 'head to toe' and 'from enlistment through often multiple experiences of sickness and wounding to their return home' (p. 11). Anna Rogers uses this framework to structure her book. Following the Introduction that provides an overview and sets

Copyright of Health & History: Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine is the property of Australian & New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine, Inc and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.