Discussion Points

Why was so little known about the human body and medicine in the Middle Ages?

What role did the Church play in medicine?

Why would the Church have banned the dissection of bodies?

How might most people have felt about doctors and surgeons in the Middle Ages?

Using the Pupil Worksheets

Worksheets will help pupils to understand that medicine in the Middle Ages was a very inexact science, bound up in religion and superstition, and that patients suffered horrifically as a result.

**PUPIL WORKSHEET 1** explores some of the strange and downright disgusting ways in which medieval medicine would have dealt with various conditions.

**PUPIL WORKSHEET 2** takes a look at the different individuals who could practice as medics at the time, and the terrifying lack of regulation.

Learning Objectives

PUPILS SHOULD LEARN:

- What ideas people had about illness and medicine in medieval times.
- How medieval medicine reflected the ideas underpinning medieval civilisation.
- Who provided medical care in medieval times.
- To make deductions based on evidence.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Ask pupils to conduct a role play. One pupil is a medieval doctor and another pupil is a modern day doctor who has travelled back in time and is trying to explain the fundamentals of modern medicine to their medieval counterpart, who is likely to be highly resistant!

Ask pupils to conduct research online into ‘the four humours’; a vital aspect of medieval thinking about medicine. You might like to ask them to present their findings back to the class, or to draw a diagram to demonstrate the four humours following their research.

**DUNGEON LINKS**

Medieval Medicine and Anatomy is a key topic which features throughout the Dungeon.

**TEACHER NOTES**

ANSWERS: Pupil Worksheet 1 Activity 1. a – ii, b – iii, c – v, d – iv, e – i, f – vii, g – vi

thedungeons.com
Activity 1

Can you match each of the conditions below to the correct medieval cure? How effective do you think each would be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Cure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toothache</td>
<td>i)  The touch of the hand of a hanged man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snakebite</td>
<td>ii) Rinse the mouth with an infusion of poppies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warts</td>
<td>iii) Apply treacle or ‘theriaka’ – a mixture including opium and roast viper flesh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>iv) Treat with the juice of willow leaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goitre</td>
<td>v) Rub them with a piece of meat. Bury the meat. When it rots they’ll disappear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiredness</td>
<td>vi) Making a small cut and letting the blood out of the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>vii) Allowing leeches to suck the blood of the patient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2

Can you write a prescription for this patient, in the style of a medieval doctor?

The patient’s symptoms are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Pains in back and head</td>
<td>c) Nausea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Difficulty sleeping at night</td>
<td>d) Sweating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medieval Medicine and Anatomy

Unlike today, you didn’t need to pass a lot of exams to become a doctor. Physicians studied medicine at university, but they didn’t have the knowledge or methods to do a very good job. Seeing a doctor was also quite expensive, it could cost you an arm and a leg...quite literally. Few people would have been able to afford a doctor’s visit. Most people would have gone to see an apothecary (like a chemist, but with no training) or a ‘wise woman’ who worked with herbs and other natural remedies.

Scary surgery

If you think going to hospital today is scary, think of the poor medieval folk! Operations were carried out by men with other jobs, such as butchers, barbers or ‘animal doctors’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, operations often ended in death. As there was no knowledge of germs, the tools used for the operations were not properly cleaned and there was a high chance of infection.

Did you know?

When a barber finished surgery, he took the bloody bandage and wrapped it round a pole to show he did surgery too. That is how the red and white swirled barber pole came about.

Activity 3

Imagine that you have been asked to write a CV for a medieval surgeon. Make sure you include information about:

- name, age, education
- previous work experience
- interests and pastimes
- skills and personal qualities

Remember, this is a medieval surgeon we are talking about here!