What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire?

L|O: To understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

F – G  identify what happened after the Roman Empire declined

D – E  To describe what happened after the Roman Empire declined.

B - C  To explain\ assess the extent of the change after the Roman Empire declined

A* - A  To evaluate how different Medieval Medicine and Public Health differed from Roman Medicine and Public Health
Medieval Public Health
Medieval towns and public places may not have been clean by modern standards, but Medieval people understood the connection between clean living and good health. Occasionally, they even took a bath.

Overview
Medieval towns did not have systems of sewers or water pipes like Rome had. Medieval towns were probably filthy. Garbage and human waste was thrown into the streets. Houses were made of wood, mud and dung.

Rats, lice and fleas flourished in the rushes strewn over the clay floors of people's houses (often changed only once a year).

However, we can't conclude that Medieval people were personally filthy, or careless of their health:

- They had their own version of the Greek's Programme for Health. The doctor Alderotti advised people to stretch their limbs, wash their face, clean their teeth, exercise etc.
- Guy de Chauliac (the Pope's doctor) realised the importance of a good diet, and that a poor diet made people more vulnerable to the plague.
- Monasteries developed comprehensive systems of public health, including fresh running water, 'lavest' (wash rooms), flush 'reredorters' (latrines) with running sewers, clean towels and a compulsory bath four times a year.
- Nobles took regular baths (perhaps two a year).
- Towns had bath houses (which were also restaurants and brothels).
- People realised that a room next to a privy was unhealthy, and towns paid 'gongfermers' to clear out the cess pits.
- Medieval kings passed laws requiring people to keep the streets clean.
- Leaders in Venice realised that sexually transmitted diseases were infectious, and ordered checks on the city's prostitutes.
- During the time of the plague many towns developed quarantine laws, and boarded up the houses of infected people. People with leprosy, likewise, were confined to lazarus houses (a place for people with infectious diseases).
- During the Middle Ages the first hospitals were built since Roman times (eg St Bart's in London).
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Look below and see how Public Health changed from Roman times to London in 1400. Which graph does it resemble most in your opinion?

Source A

ROMAN PUBLIC HEALTH

Fresh spring water brought to the city.

Aqueduct built to make sure fresh water constantly supplied the city.

Reservoir — To keep a supply of fresh water to supply the city constantly.

Cisterns and public fountains for all to use free.

Baths, barracks, private houses and official or public buildings.

Towns built away from swamps. Had doctors for the poor. Cities were cleaned.

Public latrines for all. Connected to the sewers so all effluent was carried away from the city.

Lead pipes connected to whole system. Brought fresh water to baths; cisterns; fountains and latrines. All connected to sewers which emptied into the river and took the dirt and potential disease away from the city.
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Look below and see how Public Health changed from Roman times to London in 1400. Which graph does it resemble most in your opinion?

Source B London c1100
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Look below and see how Public Health changed from Roman times to London in 1400. Which graph does it resemble most in your opinion?

**Source C: London 1400**

- Open Sewers carried waster through the streets
- 1343 Butchers ordered to use segregated area for butchering animals
- By 1380 there were at least 13 common privies (public toilets in the city)
- By the 1370s there were at least 12 teams of rakers removing dung from the streets
- By 1372 anyone who had filth outside their house could be fined 4 shillings (about £180 today)
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire?

L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health. Using the evidence below explain which of the 3 graphs you think best shows what happened to Medicine and Public Health after the decline of the Roman Empire.

A. Despite the collapse of the Roman Empire, steady progress continues.

B. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, there is a steady decline in medicine and health.

C. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, there is a rapid decline followed by a recovery many centuries later.
Using the source below explain how important Governments (Politicians; Chiefs etc.) were in maintain good Public health.

Roman senators (politicians) discuss the public health system

1 Public health is a top priority. We need a healthy, fit army to keep control of the empire.

2 And we need to keep our people healthy – sick men cannot trade or work their farms to keep the empire fed.

3 So it’s vital we have enough money for public health schemes right across the empire.

4 That isn’t difficult. We have a large and wealthy empire – and we’re very good at collecting taxes!

5 Best of all our army and government officials will make sure these schemes are built and kept in good order. We Romans do things efficiently and with discipline. That’s why we rule the empire!

6 And remember we don’t have to pay for everything. The slaves we have captured in war make a large, free workforce.

Viking chieftains discuss their plans

1 I brought back some new slaves from the last raid. They’ll be working on my farmland to make sure we have enough to eat this winter.

2 I’ll sell my share of slaves. I don’t need more of them. I can use the money to buy an amber necklace from that trader who’s just arrived in port.

3 I’m putting my treasure away so I can buy ten head of cattle in the spring.

4 Cattle! I have no time for peace and farming. What I want is for my name to be sung in the halls so that people will remember my great deeds in battle.

5 Aye, we rule a huge area thanks to our victories in battle. Everybody within a week’s march obeys us now.
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? 

L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Using the evidence below explain which of the 3 graphs you think best shows what happened to Medicine and Public Health after the decline of the Roman Empire.

Doctors followed the ideas of Galen

People lacked knowledge about germs and believed diseases could be caused by:

- Bad Smells
- Humours out of balance
- Movement of the Sun and Planets
- God and the Devil
- Invisible fumes and poisonous air

Medieval Medicine: 1066 - 1485

1348: The Black Death reached England

Efforts to keep towns clean but they did not have the money or workforce to build sewers or pipes for clean water.

When herbal treatments or bloodletting failed people would pray

The average Life expectancy was 40

MIASMA = Bad air (was believed bad air caused illness)
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health. This will help you understand why so many people suffered from ill health during the medieval period.

Match up the Causes of illness and disease to the cartoon.

**Terrible Treatments**

Roman towns had many books on medicine but tribes that followed the Romans could not read so there were no real medical treatments.

**Dodgy Diet**

Families grew their own food. Diets consisted of mainly bread; beans; peas; barley and wheat. They rarely ate red meat and this meant a lack of vitamins which meant they could not fight off disease easily.

**People worked in all weathers throughout the year. Their one set of clothes could stay wet for weeks. Cuts got dirty and infected and severe joint pain was common**

**Horrible Housing**

Most houses were unfit to live in being only one room and were draughty. Animals also lived in them too. No running water or toilets. There was a hole outside which served as a toilet. Water born diseases were common (dysentery) from which people could easily die.

**Pesky Plague**

Animal plagues often killed stock and meant less food and clothing. Owners could also catch diseases from them (skin infections).

**Furious Fighting**

Fighting was common against robbers or animals for example. It was also brutal and there were no real medical treatment for even the smallest wounds.
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What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Rotten work

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Medical knowledge in medieval times
Q1/2 What were new ideas judged on at universities?

A. The student’s debating skills
B. Scientific proof
C. The student’s background
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Medieval medical knowledge

Knowledge was hard to come by in Medieval times, especially during the Dark Ages when barbarian tribes roamed western Europe. The knowledge gained by the ancient Greeks and Romans was largely lost to Europeans, and superstition reigned - although learning was more advanced in the Muslim Middle East.

Summary

Knowledge went into reverse in the west in Medieval times - many of the books of the Greeks and Romans were lost, and the knowledge they contained was replaced by mere speculation and superstition. Even when universities developed, after 1100 (Montpellier, Bologna and Salerno had famous medical schools), lectures on anatomy were rudimentary. They consisted simply of a butcher pointing to the different parts of a body, while the lecturer read a text by an authority such as Galen.

Although students did debate the ideas of Galen, any new ideas were judged on the debating skills of the student, not on scientific proof. The Church said that Galen’s ideas were so correct that there was no need to investigate any further.

Generally, the Church forbade the dissection of human bodies, so knowledge was hard to come by - and ignorance led to numerous errors and misunderstandings on the part of Medieval doctors. For example, the Italian doctor Alderotti claimed that combing the hair ‘comforts the brain’.

Medieval superstitions

Although many Medieval doctors continued to believe in the theory of the four humours, they also said disease was caused by demons, sin, bad smells, astrology and the stars, stagnant water, the Jewish people etc.

Ultimately, they believed that life was controlled by God and his saints, and a plague such as the Black Death was seen as a punishment from God. Guy de Chauliac, the Pope’s doctor, blamed the Black Death on a conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars.

Things were different only in the Muslim Middle East where, during the reign of Harun-al-Rashid (786-809), the books of Hippocrates were translated into Arabic. At first, Muslim doctors like al-Razi (‘Rhazes known as the Galen of Islam’) conserved the ideas of the Greeks and Romans.

This illustration is by Leonhart Thurn-Heisser(1574) and represents the four humours
Medieval Doctors
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? Let us understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Medieval doctors retained some medical knowledge from the Greek and Roman eras, despite the fact that much was lost during the Dark Ages. Unfortunately, these doctors accepted the ideas of the ancients without question, and held many superstitious beliefs. This meant that patients often got worse, rather than better, under their care.

**Overview**

Medieval doctors flattered to deceive, although there were developments that gave the appearance of progress:

- Schools of medicine were set up in Universities such as Bologna and Salerno, and there were lectures in anatomy.
- New writings of Muslim doctors (such as Rhazes) became available.
- Doctors debated the best methods of treating disease.
- Padua University (alone) insisted that doctors visited the sick during their training.

These signs, however, were deceiving. For example:

- The anatomy 'lectures' consisted only of the doctor reading from a book while a prossector pointed to parts of the body.
- The ancients were held unquestioningly as the true authorities, any debates was seen merely as an opportunity to practice the art of arguing.
- Doctors had a terrible reputation. During the Black Death, "...doctors were useless and indeed shameful as they dared not visit the sick for fear of becoming infected" wrote Guy de Chauliac.

**Methods of diagnosis**

Many Medieval doctors carried with them a vademecum (meaning 'Go-with-me') book of diagnoses and a urine chart. Usually, they examined the colour, smell and taste of the patient's urine, and made an on-the-spot guess as to what they might be suffering from. Pictures from the time make it clear that doctors also did clinical observation, and took their patient's pulse.

Other essential doctor's equipment included posies, oranges or lighted tapers. Since they believed that bad smells carried disease, they believed that they could protect themselves from catching the disease by carrying something nice-smelling.

**Methods of treatment**

Since they still believed in the theory of the four humours, many of their cures involved balancing the 'humours overflowing'. They did this by bleeding, applying leeches, or causing purging or vomiting in their patients. Other ways of balancing the 'natural heat' included the taking of hot baths, drinking a soup of yellow lentils, or applying water cooled with snow.

The Medieval English poet Chaucer describes how a doctor was followed by a 'tribe' of apothecaries (medicine-makers), and it is known that medieval doctors had access to a huge range of natural healing herbs and substances. These included red rose ground fine with 'bamboo juice' for smallpox, and fig poultices for plague sores.

However, superstition increased throughout the period. Monarchs thought that by touching patients suffering from the 'King's Evil' (scrofula) they could cure them. Peasants prayed to St Roch to cure their toothache or the plague, or turned to St Anthony to cure them of 'St Anthony's Fire' (ergotism).

During the time of the plague, huge Christian processions were held, at which people flagellated (whipped) themselves, to try to show God how sorry they were for their sins.
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Stop the video and have a go. There is some help on the next slide.

**Source analysis and question**

**Source A - Johannes de Mirfield on a medicinal bath**

Mirfield, a monk and a doctor, was regarded as one of the best doctors of his time. Here is a bath which has proved to be of value. Take blind puppies, gut them, and cut off the feet; then boil in water, and in this water let the patient bathe himself. Let him get in the bath for four hours after he has eaten, and whilst in the bath he should keep his head covered, and his chest completely covered with the skin of a goat, so he won’t catch a sudden chill.

*Johannes de Mirfield, 'Flowers of Bartholomew' (c.1375)*

**Source B - Guy de Chauliac on reducing swelling**

De Chauliac was the Pope’s doctor. Bleeding and purging, cordials and medicinal powders can be used. The swellings should be softened with figs and cooked onions, peeled and mixed with yeast and butter, then lanced and treated like ulcers.

*Guy de Chauliac, 'Surgery' (c.1350)*

**Source C - John of Gaddesden on toothache**

John of Gaddesden claimed to be an expert doctor, but most of his cures relied on 'sympathetic' magic, and he clearly knew little about surgery.

When the gospel for Sunday is read during the service of the Mass, let the man hearing Mass sign his tooth and his head with the sign of the Holy Cross and say the Lord’s Prayer. It will keep him from pain and cure the tooth, so say trustworthy doctors.

*John of Gaddesden, 'English Rose' (c.1314)*
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Medieval Surgery
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Surgery made some surprising leaps forward in Medieval times. This was thanks partly to ingenious barber-surgeons on the battlefield, and partly to the discovery of some natural anaesthetics and antiseptics.

Progress of Medieval surgery

During the Middle Ages, surgery was left to barber-surgeons, not to trained doctors.

It was a time of frequent warfare, and the constant fighting meant that surgeons' skills were much in demand. Perhaps as a result, surgery actually progressed in Medieval times. Certainly Theodoric of Lucca, in the 13th century, wrote how:

"Every day we see new instruments and new methods [to extract arrows] being invented by clever and ingenious surgeons."

Theodoric of Lucca

This is completely different from the normal picture of stagnation given to us about Medieval medicine.

Techniques of Medieval surgery

Medieval surgeons realised how to use wine as an antiseptic, and they used natural substances (mandrake root, opium, gall of boar and hemlock) as anaesthetics.

Medieval surgeons could therefore do external surgery on problem areas such as facial ulcers and even eye cataracts. There was also, surprisingly, some internal surgery undertaken (e.g. to remove bladder stones).

However, they still had no idea that dirt carried disease, and most operations of Medieval times, if carried out today, would end in a suit for criminal negligence. Deep wounds still caused death from bleeding, shock and infection. Some surgeons even believed it was good to cause pus in wounds.

A medieval surgeon might cure an epileptic patient by trephining the skull to let the demon out.
What was Medicine and Public Health like after the fall of the Roman Empire? L|O: to understand the effect the end of the Roman Empire had on Medicine and Public Health.

Stop the video and have a go. There is some help on the next slide.

Source analysis and question

They brought to me a knight with a sore on his leg; and a woman who was feeble-minded. To the knight I applied a small poultice; and the woman I put on diet to turn her humour wet.

Then a French doctor came and said, "This man knows nothing about treating them." He then said, "Bring me a sharp axe." Then the doctor laid the leg of the knight on a block of wood and told a man to cut off the leg with the axe, upon which the marrow flowed out and the patient died on the spot.

He then examined the woman and said, "There is a devil in her head." He therefore took a razor, made a deep cross-shaped cut on her head, peeled away the skin until the bone of the skull was exposed, and rubbed it with salt. The woman also died instantly.

I asked them if I was needed any more, and when they said not I came home, having learned of their medicine what I knew not before.

*Usama ibn Munqidh, 'Autobiography' (c.1175) (Usama ibn Munqidh was a Muslim doctor)*

Question

What does this source tells us about surgery in Medieval times?
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Answer

- Muslim doctors were better than European doctors, and used natural cures connected to the four humours
- European doctors could be brutal, uncaring, and steeped in superstition