

How Medicine Began

In the time of the ancient Greeks, many thousands of years ago, no one understood what caused diseases. They thought people got ill because the god Apollo was angry with them. They believed that the only way for sick people to get well was by praying to Apollo. Later they also began to pray to other gods who had health-giving powers.

One of the new gods was Aesculapius, the son of Apollo. Before Aesculapius became a god, he lived on earth like other men, and studied the art of healing. He kept people so healthy that nobody died. This made Hades very angry. Hades was the god of the underworld where he ruled over the spirits of the dead. He complained to the chief god, Zeus that nobody was coming to Hades because of Aesculapius. To please Hades, Zeus killed Aesculapius with a thunderbolt, a great flash or lightening with a crashing noise. This, in turn, made Apollo very, very angry, so Zeus tried to please him by making Aesculapius the god of medicine. After this, the work of Aesculapius was continued by his children. His two sons became doctors in the Greek Army, and his daughter, Panacea, also knew a great deal about making sick people well. Another daughter, Hygeia was the goddess of Health.

In pictures and paintings of Aesculapius, we always see him holding a staff with a serpent, or snake, coiled around it. The serpent was his sign or symbol. It stood for the renewal of youth. Just as the serpent casts off its old skin and grows a new one, so medicine help us to cast off disease and grow a healthy body again. To this day, doctors use the staff and coiled serpent as the symbol of their work.

Today, we know that gods and goddesses have nothing to do with sickness and health. Today, we know that we get ill only because something has gone wrong with our bodies. The first man to teach this was a Greek physician named Hippocrates. About 2,300 years ago in the third century B.C, Hippocrates knew what we all know today that in order to keep good health, we must avoid the causes of disease.

Hippocrates is often called the Father of Medicine because he was the first to study the real cause of disease and to show that there was no truth in the old stories about the gods and goddesses. Hippocrates laid down some rules for doctors to follow, and to this day all doctors have to promise to follow the rules that he laid down when they take the Hippocratic Oath.

A. Choose the correct answer.

1. People was in the time of the ancient Greeks believed

- (A) God was infected with diseases.
- (B) sick people annoyed the god.
- (C) angry gods had healing powers
- (D) wicked people got sick.

2. People prayed to gods

- (A) for powers.
- (B) for rewards.
- (C) for life.
- (D) for belief.

3. One of the followings made Hades very angry.

- (A) Aesculapius becoming a god.
- (B).Other men on earth.
- (C) Studying the earth of healing.
- (D) Aesculapius helping sick people.

4. Hades ruled

- (A) the spirit of people in the world.
- (B). the dead.
- (C) the gods under the world.
- (D) Aesculapius.

5. Zeus made Aesculapius the god of medicine

- (A) for the world.
- (B). for Apollo.
- (C) for Hades.
- (D) for the dead.

6. The Medicine Symbol is

- (A) A staff
- (B). A serpent
- (C) A snake
- (D) The staff a serpent coiled around it.

7. Aesculapius had

- (A) two sons.
- (B). one daughter
- (C) two daughters.
- (D) four children.

8. Hippocrates was a

- (A) teacher.
- (B). father.
- (C) god.
- (D) physician.

9. Hippocrates

- (A) kept good health.
- (B) avoided the cause of diseases.
- (C) knew diseases.
- (D) found out the ways to keep away from diseases.

10. All doctors

- (A) laid down the oath.
- (B). showed that there was no truth in the old stories
- (C) took the oath.
- (D) promise Hippocrates.

B. Give the complete answers for the following questions.

- 1. What is the ancient Greeks' opinion on the diseases?**
- 2. How did Zeus punish Aesculapius?**
- 3. How did Aesculapius's children continue his work?**
- 4. What does the symbol of serpent stand for?**
- 5. Why was Hippocrates called the Father of Medicine?**

Key

- 1.C**
- 2.C**
- 3.D**
- 4.B**
- 5.B**
- 6.D**
- 7.D**
- 8.D**
- 9.D**
- 10.D**