Twitter Thread by Medical Nemesis



Medical Nemesis
@Medical_Nemesis

I am puzzled as to what the greatest medical scholar found in his research of smallpox vaccination.

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> https://t.co/qwQS3b2NPq pic.twitter.com/TqW1K3oC60
>
> — Medical Nemesis (@Medical_Nemesis) February 20, 2021

Legends and myths in medicine. Debunked. Not that but few care.

https://t.co/3Hu2D9Un0J

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nejm.org

In 1796, Fewster, a country surgeon based in the Gloucestershire town of Thornbury, wrote about an event that had occurred in 1768. That year, he and two colleagues, Hugh Grove and Daniel Sutton, began inoculating people against smallpox. "We found in this practice that a great number of patients could not be infected with Small Pox poison, not withstanding repeated exposure under most favourable circumstances for taking the disease," Fewster recounted. "At length the cause of the failure was discovered from the case of a farmer who was inoculated several times ineffectually, yet he assured us that he had never suffered the Small Pox, but, says he, 'I have had the Cow Pox lately to a violent degree, if that's any odds.'"[2] It turned out that the other patients with no response to smallpox inoculation had all had cowpox as well.

Fewster described his observation to his medical society, which met at the Ship Inn in Alveston and was composed of about seven other local surgeons and apothecaries. Among them were the Ludlow brothers, Daniel and Edward. In 1768, Jenner was their apprentice. He probably heard

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TO THE EDITOR:

Smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980[1] thanks to the use of the vaccine initially developed by Edward Jenner in 1798.[2] Since that time, it has generally been assumed that the smallpox vaccine is based on cowpox virus, even though it has been known since the late 1930s that the virus that is used to immunize against smallpox, now referred to as vaccinia, differs from cowpox virus. The true origin of vaccinia virus is unknown, and it is usually described as a laboratory virus without a known natural host. Smallpox vaccines from many different sources were used until 1967, when the World Health Organization standardized four vaccinia strains that were widely used in the global smallpox eradication effort, although other vaccines were also used.[1]

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Where have we seen this before? ■

Jenner and Vaccination

"3. That the outcry against compulsory vaccination is mainly due to certain interested persons, who, by the dissemination of inflammatory literature, and by the propagation of falsehoods and distorted statements, stir up opposition to vaccination on the part of ignorant and thoughtless people." [1]

These accusations are but the angry words of disconcerted professional opinion, when it finds out that there is a power in the State setting its authority at defiance. The anti-vaccinists are those who have found some motive for scrutinizing the evidence, generally the very human motive of vaccinal injuries or fatalities in their

[1] *British Medical Journal*, 1880, ii. 103.

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own families or in those of their neighbours. Whatever their motive, they have scrutinized the evidence to some purpose; they have mastered nearly the whole case; they have knocked the bottom out of a grotesque superstition [1]. The public at large cannot believe that a great

It appears Charles Creighton questioned Jenner vaccination on scientific, procedural, and humanitarian grounds. Of note he starts exploration of the subject with a look at Jenner's persona and context of his experiments. /6

Charles Creighton was a British physician and medical author. He was highly regarded for his scholarly writings on medical history but was widely denounced for disputing the germ theory of infectious diseases. Wikipedia

Born: November 22, 1847, Peterhead, United Kingdom

Died: July 18, 1927, Upper Boddington, United Kingdom

Creighton produces a very detailed account how vaccination fad took hold without much reasonable evidence (at the time). Those familiar with politics of medicinal enterprise may find this painfully familiar. /7

Creighton asserts that Jenner got preoccupied with cowpox/smallpox connection due to name similarity of the disease. /8

way. While his prosaic medical neighbours saw no point of contact between cowpox and smallpox, and while they gave due heed to the abundant experience that cowpoxed milkers had not escaped the common epidemic of the time, Jenner persuaded himself that the one kind of pox was somehow related to the other, that there was a scientific or pathological basis for the rumoured antagonism between them, and that the cases of smallpox in previously cowpoxed milkers must have been exceptions which he would one day be able to account for.

Interesting juxtaposition of observable reality vs artificial experiment. Creighton suggests Jenner cherry-picked "evidence". /9

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Jenner and Vaccination

The experimentation was of two degrees: firstly, to inoculate old cowpoxed milkers with smallpox in order to see whether they would take it; and, secondly, to give the cowp.x of purpose to a child, and then apply the variolous test. Why any one wanting to get at the truth should prefer experiment to casual experience in the case of old cowpoxed milkers, is beyond comprehension; the real but unavowed and perhaps unconscious object of experimenting upon them was, in fact, to circumvent experience, and to find a "scientific" reason for a comfortable illusion. Jenner accordingly kept silence about the cases of cowpoxed milkers subsequently smallpoxed, which he might easily have collected in considerable numbers from the experience of his own district. He confined his attention to such cowpoxed milkers as had *not* subsequently received smallpox either by accident or design; and these cases he adduced as experimental proof of the protective power of cowpox.

In two or three of them, the experimental test had been merely the "exposure" of the cowpoxed person to the contagion of smallpox—as if the majority of adults and elderly persons in those days had not been equally exposed with equal immunity. In a few others the experimental proof was discovered retrospectively in the failure to inoculate them with smallpox when others were being inoculated; but it was not attempted to prove that these failures in cowpoxed adults were more frequent than in adults not cowpoxed. Two or three more were variolated by Jenner himself with the particular intention of testing their resistance acquired

A slight of hand - invention of a fancy name for a common disease. This is still a common technique in “science” to attract attention and I inspire awe. Rebranding of disease often allows to create illusion of disease eradication or emergence.

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The title of Jenner's cowpox paper is: "An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolæ Vaccinæ, a Disease discovered in some of the Western Counties, especially Gloucestershire, and known by the name of the Cowpox." An objection might be taken to "discovered," but let that pass. The leading line in this full and learned title is Variolæ Vaccinæ, which is the only name in the short title. Now Variolæ Vaccinæ is Latin for *smallpox of the cow*. An affection of cows and milkers, which had been known to country people for generations as the cowpox, is suddenly introduced to the learned, who had never heard of it before, under a brand-new name. The new name is put in the forefront of the title, it overshadows the old country name both by its prominence and by its semblance of scientific precision, and, for purposes of short reference, it becomes the sole name. This startling novelty is on the title-pages, and only on the title-pages. Jenner never says, in the preface or text, that the name is a new one, hitherto unheard of in veterinary or medical writings; he never says a single word to justify its invention; he never once uses it in the preface or text at all. But there it stands in the title as the full, correct, and scientific name of the disease, to be copied in journals and repeated in a hundred ways when not another word of the essay would be copied or repeated, carrying with it, in short, all the power over the ideas that a descriptive or suggestive synonym for an unfamiliar thing does naturally carry with it.[1]

[1] Jenner never publicly defended the innovation, but the following jottings were found among his posthumous papers, and printed by Baron (ii. 30):—