

Reforms and Social Changes / Health

There have been continuous exchanges between Arab and European medicine since antiquity. In the 19th century, countries in the Arab and Ottoman world called on Western doctors to open modern, Western-style hospitals and dispensaries and to train the local elite. Colonial powers attempted to transpose modern methods that were beginning to bear fruit in Europe to the Arab and Ottoman world: improved hygiene, hospital construction and training of medical staff. Severe epidemics, endemic diseases and infant mortality all needed to be tackled. These efforts were particularly visible in large towns.



Working Number: FR 084
Name: Médailles d'honneur d'or et de 1er mérite [...] Biberon-Robert, flexible, patented [...] Only the very best doesn't let your child go thirsty
Holding Museum:
Date: National Library of France
Materials: 1882
Curator Justification: -

In order to prevent contagion and infant diseases related to inadequate hygiene, doctors and hygienists worked to teach mothers new habits. Manufacturers adapted their products to the new hygiene rules.



Working Number: TN 039
Name: Institut Pasteur
Holding Museum: -
Date: 19th century
Materials: -
Curator Justification: The Pasteur Institute in Tunis is typical of the construction of research centres in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and was dedicated to identifying different diseases and epidemics.



Working Number: FR 090
Name: Laënnec examining a patient at the Necker Hospital in 1816
Holding Museum: National Library of France
Date: 19th century
Materials: -
Curator Justification: The history of medicine is marked by major discoveries in the 19th century, such as Laënnec's discoveries on auscultation (listening for body sounds, for example with a stethoscope). These discoveries helped to improve detection of diseases and care for patients.



Working Number: PT 086
Name: Portable pharmacy
Holding Museum: Pharmacy Museum
Date: c. 1880–1900
Materials: Wood, glass, white metal, brass
Curator Justification:

Great progress was also made in the field of pharmacy in the 19th century. Medication and antiseptics were taken on journeys and to front lines in special boxes.



Working Number: RO 028
Name: The Ambulance
Holding Museum: National Museum of Romanian History
Date: 1877
Materials: -
Curator Justification: The numerous wars of the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in millions of wounded and dead. Ironically, this was a source of progress for medicine, in particular in the field of surgery, anaesthesia and asepsis.



Working Number: IT2 023
Name: Nosocomium [Latin: Hospital]
Holding Museum: National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM)
Date: 1895
Materials: Oil on canvas
Curator Justification: Advances in psychiatry enabled a very gradual improvement in care for patients in Europe in the 19th century. Psychiatric illnesses were becoming better identified, and patients were no longer systematically locked up.



Working Number: UK 142
Name: An Anxious Hour
Holding Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum
Date: 1865
Materials: Oil on panel
Curator Justification: In the mid-19th century, infant mortality was still high. Children's diseases were harrowing for parents.



Working Number: MO 084
Name: Photograph illustrating the response to the government's public vaccination campaign
Holding Museum: National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco
Date: 1916
Materials: Paper
Curator Justification: The invention of vaccinations helped to save many lives, such as the vaccination against smallpox, a very contagious and sometimes fatal disease.
