

Sample Research Proposal 3

The Cure-alls of the 19th Century

This essay will explore medicine in the 19th and early 20th century. It will provide examples of medicine as well as what it cured. It will also explore firsthand perceptions of the cures and their successes and then the fall of cure-alls, disguised drugs, and a lack of regulations on medicines.

The frontier was a place of desperation regarding medical treatments. There were plenty of new ways to injure yourself and others. People were spread out and were often on their own trying to cure themselves. Their lives were new, adventurous, and it was difficult to predict what ailment or injury would hit them next. In a vulnerable state, they were willing to try cures that luckily were often enough a cure-all. Be it the plague or a common cough, a broken leg to a stubbed toe, they could look to one source. Their eagerness to try and trust these cures led to further problems. A significant amount of the cures were made of addictive pain killers or off the wall placebos. Peoples' optimism towards these salesmen's' and doctors' suggestions did not last forever when people began to realize just how inconsistent and detrimental the cures were.

Questions of why the people were so eager to believe in these cures will be explored as well as why they were eventually abandoned. Peoples' desperation and condition moved them to be trusting and optimistic in their medical purchases ultimately resulting in more issues, addictions, and a shift away from cure-alls and not regulated medicine.

Frontier Medicine is a narrative by historian David Dary explores medicine from 1492-1941. It includes a number of accounts of medicine use, instructions, and content. It discusses the roles of doctors and what they recommended.

Keeping Secrets is an article written by Timothy Hickman. Hickman compiles primary sources about Dr Leslie E Keeley, a less known doctor in the 19th century who identified the issue of addiction as a result of these cures and explored ways to cure addiction.

The Great American Fraud was written in the early 1900s and was published in the Collier magazine by a muckraker named Samuel Hopkins Adams. He brought to the public's attention the issues with these cures that created uproar and public upset.

Journal of the American Medical Association Volume 15 was published in 1890 and lists common medical issues and the recommended actions.

The US National Library of Medicine has a significant number of journals from doctors at that time that still needs sifted through. This is also true to the many newspapers that contain advertisements for these cures.

This exploration of the medical side of the old west will also explain the peoples' mentalities at the time. If they were so willing to try these cures, what does that say about their lives? Health and well being is such a part of everyday life that its history is both fascinating and important. The study of it will shed light on different aspects of society that will add intrigue and understanding of daily life in the west.