

Book Reviews

Pamela Hunter, *Veterinary medicine: a guide to historical sources*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, pp. ix, 611, £65.00 (hardback 0-7546-4053-1).

This book provides an original and extensive guide to primary source material within the field of veterinary medicine. Compiled with the support of the Wellcome Trust and Business Archives Council and also available as a database, it aims to facilitate investigations into this neglected area. As Roger Cooter points out in his foreword, animals have never attracted so much attention as at present. Consequently, veterinary history not only illuminates the development of the veterinary field but also, “provides a means to reflect on much of what is crucial to contemporary society, economy, politics and culture” (p. vii). This book will enable new entrants to the field to tackle such issues by allowing projects to be framed in the light of available resources.

The book opens with a 31-page introduction to veterinary history, which reveals just how much work remains to be done before the field reaches a parallel state of development to medical history. Pamela Hunter’s teleological and progressive view of veterinary professional development reflects the nature of her sources, many of which are over twenty years old. Many of the chapter’s claims are ripe for reassessment, while other important subjects receive little mention, having failed to attract historic attention. Unfortunately, Hunter makes no reference to works produced after 1999, a significant omission given that this chapter is designed as a “jumping off point” for researchers.

The remainder of the book provides a “user-friendly” guide to primary source materials. Hunter firstly discusses the types of records available, their nature and potential uses to historians. She is careful to acknowledge the limitations of this material, and also directs the reader towards oral histories and veterinary journals. She goes on to provide a detailed listing of available resources, grouping material according to the following categories: records of practices, individuals, companies, trade bodies and professional associations, national government, local government, education and

research establishments, charities, zoos, and minor collections. A brief summary of each document or file is provided, together with its location. The clarity of these listings is enhanced by the extensive index, which lists sources by name, place, subject and archive repository.

One especially praiseworthy aspect of this book is its scope. Material is not limited to the two-century lifespan of the British veterinary profession, but includes older farriery records and drug recipes. Nor is it devoted entirely to veterinarians and their institutions; indeed the list of records emphasizes the profession’s historic connections with agriculture, medicine and pharmacy. Sources includes the records of agricultural institutions, medical research institutes, and pharmaceutical companies that viewed veterinary medicines as a sideline, while one-third of the listings in the ‘Records of individuals’ chapter relates to medical men. My only quibble is that at no point does Hunter state the principles on which she based her selection. Consequently, it is unclear why certain sources are listed and others not. Why include the Royal Agricultural Society and not the National Farmers’ Union? Why the Department of Agriculture at Newcastle and not Bangor or Wye? Why the Lister Institute and not the Institute for Animal Health?

While researchers should be wary of treating this book as the “final word” on veterinary primary source material, it is nevertheless an essential starting point for existing and prospective veterinary historians. At £65, is it clearly not designed for purchase by individuals, but deserves a place on library shelves.

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Nady S Hakim and Vassilios E Papalois (eds), *History of organ and cell transplantation*, London, Imperial College Press, 2003, pp. xviii, 444, illus., £58.00 (hardback 1-86094-209-1).

This collection of papers deals with specific aspects of the recent history of organ and cell

transplantation. All are written by authors who have in some way or other participated in that history. Since organ transplantation is a multi-disciplinary endeavour, the authors' professional affiliations range from immunology to paediatrics. Historians or social scientists are absent.

Topics covered vary from the transplantation of specific organs and tissues, like the kidney or pancreatic islets, to overarching themes such as the history of HLA and transplantation immunity and the history of ethical issues in transplantation. The individual papers have the character of survey papers on the existing scientific literature about their respective topics (though most not extending further back than the 1950s). Some of them contain respectable numbers of references, up to several hundred. There is no mention of any secondary literature from history or social science in any of the articles. The papers in many respects much resemble the introductory passages of scientific papers. They survey all the previous efforts at a procedure, for example, kidney transplantation or the identification of HLA tissue types, and interpret the literature on the background to the present state of the art on kidney transplants and HLA typing. There is not much information that has not been published elsewhere, either in other books of the same character or in articles (except maybe the chapter on the history of arm transplants, which is a very recent innovation). Some of the articles seem to be recycled. The advantage for the reader is having all the contributions conveniently gathered in one volume.

For historians of medicine the present book is less a contribution to the history of transplantation than a collection of sources. Because of their technical character the articles come in handy for the purpose of establishing a time-line of what was done when. The multitude of references alone is a goldmine for further research. Some articles also contain snippets of personal recollections, which could be useful starting points of oral history accounts. Some of the contributions, for example the one on brain death, are also interesting since they reflect the ideological commitments of leading transplant

experts today. As a whole, the volume gives a good picture of how surgeons and scientists currently view the technical history of transplantation. A point of criticism is that there is no instruction as to the origin and possible interpretation of the intriguing title picture. It shows a crouched female figure in black metal. She seems to be offering her internal organs, in red, taken from her hollow abdomen, to the heavens. In the background are six drawings of different personalities, one of them probably Peter Medawar, another seems to depict Alexis Carrel. Here some more information would have been useful.

This book is an interesting starting point for anybody who wants to do research on the history of organ and cell transplantation.

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H J Klasen, *History of burns*, Nieuwe Nederlandse Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde en der Natuurwetenschappen, No. 62, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 2004, pp. 632, illus., €80.00, US\$120.00 (hardback 90-5235-168-6).

My only real encounter with modern medicine was in 1962 when, after reinventing the Molotov cocktail, I spent a month in hospital with a badly burnt leg. Eventually, with a degree of insouciance, I was able to munch my morning toast as the nurses ripped off the foul-smelling pus-encrusted bandages, inspected for granulation, applied ointments, and re-wrapped me in gauze. Except for the antibiotics to counter the gangrene, the experience might have been medieval. How could I have guessed that my burnt leg was the repository of advanced pathological and molecular biomedical wisdom? Precisely around this time, apparently, the complex physiology of burns was becoming a subject of laboratory investigation. Although the strange effects of my burns on my internal organs had been the subject of intermittent debate since antiquity, it was also only in the 1960s that burns experts began to