

Annotation

This paper is topical mostly due to the **epidemic of coronavirus** that started in **2020**. It provides answers to such important questions as “**How did our ancestors face epidemics** (e.g. the Plague of Justinian)?”, “**When was the first hospital built?**”, and many others.

The paper helps understand the **phenomenon of disease in fourth to sixth centuries AD**.



Ancient and Medieval Scientists' Achievements

One should not criticize ancient and medieval scientists. Firstly, they were bound by the **moral requirements** of their time that **forbade autopsy**. Secondly, they had neither the **necessary scientific knowledge** nor the **instruments** to help them draw certain conclusions. Finally, there was the **cult of suffering** in Christianity, according to which diseases were considered visitations of God.

Diseases such as *plague*, *dysentery*, *smallpox*, *typhus*, and *falling evil* (epilepsy) had been **identified**. Besides, Western Europeans were aware of *leprosy*, *elephantiasis*, and many other illnesses, which is proven in the *chronicles* by *Gregory of Tours*, *Marius of Avenches*, and many others. Some **healing techniques** had also been applied; for example, they performed *cupping therapy*, used *herbal medicines*, etc.



Aurelius Augustinus

Introduction

It is worth mentioning that despite the **underdevelopment of Western Europe**, according to its inhabitants, **many diseases had been known**, and the **attempts to treat them** had already been made. Many physicians were familiar with the works of **Hippocrates**, e. g. *Vindicianus* who **Blessed Augustine** spoke about in “*Confessiones*”. Although Hippocrates was well-known, **Galen** completely dominated medical science until the 13th century.

The **purpose** of this work is to deepen understanding of the time period which lasted from fourth through sixth centuries AD and try to get inside the mind of ancient people.

The **results of this research** are significant, especially during the time of the pandemic.

Methods and Sources

Comparative and logical methods were applied.

The most difficult part was to find **relevant information sources**. However, works by *A. Gurevich* help to get *insight into the epoch*, *M. Fuko* and *M. Milan* provide modern research on *ancient diseases mentioned in various sources*, *V. Tulenev* does *translations from Latin*. These scientists have made a huge contribution to the study of this topic.

Unfortunately, their efforts and diligence still cannot shed light on some **dark spots in history**. There is no information and this makes us theorize.

Conclusion

The “Dark Ages” do not seem so dark any more. **Christianity** brought about a lot of **important changes**, both positive and negative.

People believed in *healing through prayers, miracles of saints and the righteous*. As a result, the perception of diseases was intertwined with **Christian ethics**, that is why the development of *knowledge was limited and insignificant*, it was *rather impulsive than progressive* and was associated with bright people, such as *Galen*.

The study of this topic should continue. A lot of sources have not been translated into Russian. Though translation of these sources cannot change science fundamentally, it can breathe life into research on this particular historic period.



Cassiodorus