

## The Middle Ages

### A period of regression.

History does not have constant progress. There are periods of little change and periods when conditions get worse.

Without the Romans, public health systems were not used or repaired. Without the empire the building programme could not be funded. As water systems no longer worked and sewerage no longer took waste away conditions in towns got worse. People lost the skills to maintain the public health systems.

Knowledge was lost. Roman and Greek books were lost or destroyed or forgotten.

Libraries

were destroyed and money spent on war rather than studying the human body. Some books were kept by the church. However these were not available to all and the church forbid access to books that it did not think agreed with its teachings.

### Ideas on cause of disease

During the middle ages people relied less on science and more on superstition. The church controlled learning and largely banned dissection. Monks and doctors provided herbal cures.

The church taught people disease was a curse from god. Others believed the planets controlled their lives. Doctors continued to use the 4 humours but many did not trust doctors.

### Slow progress

The middle ages is a period of slow progress in medicine. Doctors were better trained. As this was before printing new ideas could not spread quickly. The works of Galen were taught as fact and they were not questioned. The church supported the works of Galen and so to question Galen was to question the church. Although limited dissection did take place, it

was conducted as explained by Galen. The lecturer read from Galen's book there was no questioning of Galen's work. Much of Galen's work was still lost so the schools only used fragments.

The mistakes on anatomy went unchallenged. The main problems of surgery remained. Hugh of Lucca used wine as an antiseptic, but did not know why it worked. However not everyone accepted this new idea. Some people tried drugs to put people to sleep but this was not commonly tried and must have been unsuccessful as not many people tried it.