

Authors

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Aid as Medieval Medicine

In her [TED Talk earlier this year](#) Esther Duflo compared much of modern aid to medieval medicine.

"The thing is, if we don't know whether we are doing any good, we are not any better than the Medieval doctors and their leeches. Sometimes the patient gets better, sometimes the patient dies. Is it the leeches? Is it something else? We don't know."

Well a [newly published set of 18th and 19th Century medical notebooks](#) shows that the crazy medical practices didn't end in medieval times.

In the days when Britannia ruled the waves, Royal Navy doctors revived drowning men with tobacco smoke, treated scorpion stings with rum and advised sailors to gargle with sulphuric acid to combat scurvy.

Evidence-based treatment that is not.

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