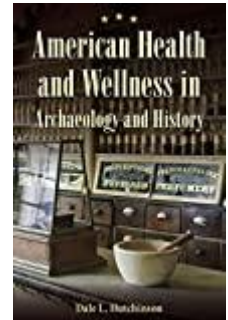


Dale L. Hutchinson. *American Health and Wellness in Archaeology and History.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2022. 234 pp. \$90.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-6914-2.



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From growing up in his family's pharmacy to writing the book during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dale L. Hutchinson introduces and concludes his book on healthcare in America through a personal lens. From these entry points, the book seeks to present a broad overview of American healthcare, primarily in the Eastern United States from 1600 to 1950. While this is an ambitiously extensive topic, Hutchinson manages to be remarkably succinct, covering this period in under two hundred pages. The writing style is clear and engaging, making the book an enjoyable and informative read. While it appears to be aimed at a primarily academic audience, the book is certainly also accessible for the lay reader with an interest in the history of medicine.

As Hutchinson states in his introduction, the book explores various historical narratives with a focus on the material, but it is not intended to be an exhaustive account. Rather, the book focuses on several trends and key cases, using archaeological reports and primary and secondary historical sources. Hutchinson's background is as a bioar-

chaeologist working with human skeletal remains from the Eastern United States as well as Andean South America. In his more recent work, he has transitioned to examine disease in colonial American contexts more broadly (*Disease and Discrimination: Poverty and Pestilence in Colonial Atlantic America*, 2016). The new book builds from that, seeking to provide a more extensive overview of healthcare and wellness from the colonial period through the start of the twentieth century. The manuscript is organized chronologically into four parts divided by era. Within each, subsections focus on key topics from those periods such as the rise of formal medical training during the pre-Civil War period, understandings of germs and hygiene in the Civil War and Reconstruction section, and patent medicines in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. This organizational structure is coherent, although many of the topics discussed reach beyond their temporal sections. The chronological underpinnings are somewhat fluid, as each chapter within the section

moves through time and then returns back to trace a different topic through the same period.

Archaeologists have increasingly been contributing to interdisciplinary discussions in the history of medicine. Historical archaeologists working in North America have found medical artifacts in excavated trash deposit sites at the homes of doctors and of midwives, at a Japanese internment camp, in enslavement contexts, in institutions and almshouses, and in the trash deposits of other households and residences.[1] Bioarchaeologists—archaeologists who study human remains—have also excavated numerous burial sites, such as the colonial-era African burial ground in New York, and have analyzed the remains of unclaimed skeletal remains from nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban contexts.[2] These studies provide a different set of insights into the history of medicine by examining daily life practices and individual experiences, especially those of marginalized people whose lives are minimally documented in written records. Considering material remains and documentary records synthetically can highlight historical processes that were not well documented and recover information about the lives of marginalized individuals. Hutchinson seeks to synthesize the results of numerous archaeological projects, going in depth into several key projects such as the excavation of brothels in Washington, DC, the excavation of the notorious Five Points neighborhood in New York, and a cache of human remains used for dissections at the Medical College of Georgia.[3]

Hutchinson's central argument emphasizes social context, stating, "one cannot understand the concepts of health and disease without understanding the contexts in which those concepts were conceived" (p. 183). In some portions of the text, this goal is accomplished effectively, but in other places he defaults to a white, middle- or upper-class social context. The main exception to this is chapter 1, which begins the book by parsing through the different healing traditions that inter-

acted within early colonial America, specifically Indigenous, African, and European perspectives on disease and care. Hutchinson explains one should "think of the early colonial period where people from different places had their own distinct diseases and other health issues, and their own traditional ways and means for dealing with them" (p. 11). Hutchinson acknowledges that the three categories of "Indian," "African," and "European" each collect a diversity of approaches, and he effectively pulls out some ontological differences in perspectives on disease and the body and trends across these large groups. While this framework is valuable, it would be more effective if Hutchinson returned to these categories throughout the book. Instead, he discusses them in chapter 1 and then does not return to this framework, except to mention it in the conclusion.

While the book synthesizes a number of key archaeological projects, it is far from exhaustive. Notably absent from the discussions and bibliography are key works from leading black scholars in the field, such as Michael Blakey, Rachel Watkins, and Lesley Rankin-Hill.[4] Hutchinson even discusses the complicated process of working with skeletal remains and partial written records, but neglects to cite Rachel Watkins and Jennifer Muller's influential 2015 article that specifically addresses this topic.[5] Chapter 4 contains multiple sections discussing the use of bodies for medical dissection, but misses an opportunity to discuss the long history of using black bodies, especially those of enslaved people, for medical testing and study. These topics have been covered extensively in key works such as Daina Ramey Berry's *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (2017) and Harriet Washington's *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (2006). The absence of these and other important studies is noticeable to anyone well versed in medical history literature.

One striking manifestation of this oversight is found in Hutchinson's discussion of gynecology, and specifically of J. Marion Sims, in chapter 5, "Suspect Specialists." Sims, sometimes called the "father of American gynecology," is known for his brutal, violent, and inhumane experimentation on three enslaved women, Lucy, Betsy, and Anarcha. Hutchinson writes, "There are potentially some darker sides" to the story, but does not provide details or name the women involved, leaving the reader without necessary context. Hutchinson acknowledges that "there is debate on Sims's ethics," which has resulted in Sims's statue being removed from Central Park due to protests (p. 94), but neglects to explain further. Scholars such as Harriet Washington and C. Riley Snorton (*Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, 2017) have extensively analyzed the archival materials relating to Sims, including his journals and medical records, relaying detailed accounts of Sims's testing procedures and his awareness of his enslaved test subjects' agony during the procedures. Rather than providing the reader with some of the key points of Sims's approaches, or directing the reader to further discussion, Hutchinson glosses over and minimizes the issues at stake.

Overall, the book is an engaging read with some interesting and valuable case studies. For scholars of medical history seeking to learn more about archaeology's contributions to the discourse, this book would provide an accessible entry point. However, it should not be considered a balanced or complete overview of these topics within archaeology. Despite that, it is replete with engaging anecdotes and esoteric knowledge, such as a fad diet from the early twentieth century that suggested, "Chewing should occur until the food is liquified, all the flavor gone, and held in the mouth for at least 30 seconds after liquification" (p. 169). The writing style is engaging and the text covers an array of fascinating topics in a remarkably succinct package.

Notes

[1]. For doctors' homes, see Mary C. Beaudry, "Stories that Matter: Material Lives in Nineteenth-century Lowell and Boston, Massachusetts," in *Cities in the World, 1500–2000* (London: Routledge, 2006), 249–68; for midwives' homes, see Laurie A. Wilkie, *The Archaeology of Mothering: An African-American Midwife's Tale* (New York: Routledge, 2003); for the Japanese internment camp, see Kaitlyn Hosken and Kristen Tiede, "Caring for Their Prisoner Compatriots: Health and Dental Hygiene at the Kooskia Internment Camp," *Historical Archaeology* 52, no. 3 (2018): 585–99; for enslavement contexts, Yvonne Edwards-Ingram, "African American Medicine and the Social Relations of Slavery," in *Race and the Archaeology of Identity*, ed. Charles Orser Jr. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001), 34–53, and Meredith Reifschneider, "Enslavement and Institutionalized Care: The Politics of Health in Nineteenth-century St. Croix, Danish West Indies," *World Archaeology* 50, no. 3 (2018): 494–511; and for institutions and almshouses, see April M. Beisaw and James G. Gibb, eds., *The Archaeology of Institutional Life* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

[2]. For the colonial-era African burial ground, see Michael L. Blakey and Lesley M. Rankin-Hill, eds., *The Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 2009); for unclaimed remains, see, for example, Rachel Watkins, "Variation in Health and Socioeconomic Status within the W. Montague Cobb Skeletal Collection: Degenerative Joint Disease, Trauma and Cause of Death," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 22, no. 1 (2012): 22–44, and Aja M. Lans, "Decolonize This Collection: Integrating Black Feminism and Art to Re-examine Human Skeletal Remains in Museums," *Feminist Anthropology*, 2 (2021): 130–42, <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12027>, among others.

[3]. For Washington, see Donna J. Seifert, "Within Site of the White House: The Archaeology of Working Women," *Historical Archaeology* 25, no. 4 (1991): 82–108; for New York, see Rebecca

Yamin, “Wealthy, Free, and Female: Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century New York,” *Historical Archaeology* 39, no. 1 (2005): 4–18; and for Georgia, see Robert L. Blakely and Judith M. Harrington, *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1997).

[4]. Blakey and Lesley Rankin-Hill, eds., *Skeletal Biology*; Watkins, “Variation in Health and Socioeconomic Status”; Lesley Rankin-Hill, *A Biohistory of 19th-Century Afro-Americans: The Burial Remains of a Philadelphia Cemetery* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1997).

[5]. Rachel J. Watkins and Jennifer Muller, “Repositioning the Cobb Human Archive: The Merger of a Skeletal Collection and Its Texts,” *American Journal of Human Biology* 27, no. 1 (2015): 41-50, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.22650>.

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