

Workshop Mothers, Wives, and Healers: Women's Agency in Medicine and Health

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Description and Discussion Questions:

In contemporary public health debates, mothers have emerged as dominant but controversial authorities in decisions regarding health, particularly over that of children. Critics often link the agency of mothers and female patients with the “subversive” influence of non-traditional female healers, including midwives and herbalists. While women have gained a foothold in professions of orthodox medicine in the West, there are still clearly gendered dynamics to discussions of agency in healthcare. We can see this in discussions of childhood vaccinations and outbreak of disease, such as the 2016 measles epidemic at Disneyland in California. Meanwhile other practitioners seek to form alliances with mothers and non-traditional healers in order to more effectively support campaigns against disease. The discussion over the proper role of women in health care raises questions about the emergence of authority and agency in matters of health, the relationship between authorities (familial or medical), the relationship between tradition and innovation, and the role of gender in matters of medicine and science in the early modern period.

Scholars have previously focused on the nineteenth century as the start of modern practices and authorities in medicine and health. It is also portrayed as a period that idealized motherhood medically as well as socially, allowing women to assume greater authority over the physical and moral welfare of children. The early modern period, on the other hand, is characterized as an era of patriarchy with newly emerging medical professions leading to the exclusion of women as healers. Midwives stand out in the literature as symbolic of this professionalization and gendering of

scientific medicine as anathema to the female gender.

While scholars such as Adrian Wilson have pointed out the role that aristocratic women in England played in the transfer of authority from traditional female midwives to male midwives and doctors, in this workshop we seek to explore the agency of women in the area of health outside of the areas of pregnancy and childbirth. The early modern period was one of massive transformation in medicine and health care and we seek to broaden the scholarship by showing women's continuing and emerging roles in medicine. Women were not invisible and did not disappear under the pressure of patriarchy and science. We seek to start a discussion of the diverse ways that women engaged in discussions of health and asserted agency, as healers and patients, mothers, and wives. This includes not only women's association with herbals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also women's agency in controversial innovations, such as inoculation against smallpox in the eighteenth century.

Our areas of expertise and readings will facilitate discussion across cultures in the early modern West in order to look for patterns and differences in regards to the status of women and health. Questions we will explore include: What agency did women have in making health and treatment decisions for others? How did women collaborate with male physicians regarding their own health and that of their family members? How did women interact with female practitioners or other women regarding medical decisions? Were these effective alliances or problematic? How was the writing of women or to women coded by gender? Did emerging professions within medicine invalidate traditional knowledge from midwives and female family members? How did women weigh the source and nature of medical advice? How was the role of women linked to ideas of civilization and biological imperatives? Was women's authority increasingly situational, i.e. dependent on topic (breastfeeding versus disease) and urgency (nutrition versus epidemic) within their communities?

These questions appeal to not only historians, but also to anthropologists, sociologists, and specialists in literature, for example. In particular, the panel would address the conference themes of collectivity and confrontation through such issues as familial networks, circulation of knowledge, alliances, opposing authority, clashes within and across disciplines, and collaboration during times of conflict and change.

The selected primary sources are linked by intellectual tradition and contemporary circulation across nations and communities in the West. Our source materials will offer a range of perspectives from women and men involved in making health care decisions in order to allow us to

pursue the previous questions. Our materials include published works, manuscripts, archival materials, and images in order to permit multiple lines of discussion within the workshop. We seek not only share our areas of research, but also that of the participants.

Our suggested readings are secondary sources to help contextualize our discussion of these questions. They also demonstrate the longevity or questions and concerns about women's role in medicine and healthcare.

Suggested readings:

1. Excerpt from *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*. Office of the Surgeon General (US); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); Office on Women's Health (US). Rockville (MD): Office of the Surgeon General (US); 2011.
2. Hawkins, Mary. "Breastfeeding is a Mother's Choice, Not a Public Health Issue." *The Stir: Café Mom* (blog), March 9, 2012, http://thestir.cafemom.com/baby/134322/breastfeeding_is_a_mothers_choice/.
3. Leong, Elaine. 2013. "Collecting Knowledge for the Family: Recipes, Gender and Practical Knowledge in the Early Modern English Household." *Centaurus*. 55 (2): 81-103.
4. Phillips, Kristine. "A Mother Refused to Follow a Court Order to Vaccinate her Son. Now She's Going to Jail." *The Washington Post Online*, October 4, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2017/10/12/a-mother-was-jailed-for-refusing-to-vaccinate-her-son-now-shes-outraged-hes-been-immunized/?utm_term=.37e24bcf633c.
5. Radner, Joan N., and Susan S. Lanser. "The Feminist Voice: Strategies of Coding in Folklore and Literature." *The Journal of American Folklore* 100, no. 398 (1987): 412-25.

Attending to Early Modern Women Conference, 2018

Workshop: Mothers, Wives, and Healers: Women's Agency in Medicine and Health
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Contained in this Document:

1. Selections from Seventeenth-Century British popular medical and botanical texts, demonstrating the range of the intended audiences.
2. An excerpt from Gervase Markham's *The English House-Wife*, describing the importance of the woman of the house as its primary physician.
3. Selections related to inoculation, from Lady Mary Worley Montagu, and John and Abigail Adams.
4. Exerpts from English texts presenting additional perspectives on the eighteenth century debate regarding inoculation.
5. Images of inoculation and vaccination.
6. Advertisements written by women seeking positions as wet-nurses, as well as those from families seeking the services of a wet-nurse.
7. An exerpt from Samuel Ferris' *A dissertation on milk...*
8. Selections from the personal correspondence of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, and of Gertrude Gouverneur Ogden Meredith.
9. Selections from the published unabridged diary of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker (ed. Elaine Forman Crane)

British Botanical and Medical Texts:

1. John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (London: Lownes and Young, 1629)
2. Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Last Legacy left and bequeathed to his Dearest Wife* (London: N. Brooke, 1655)
3. Elizabeth Blackwell, *A Curious Herbal* (London: Samuel Harding, 1737)

All three of these texts present the introductions from Herbal and medicinal texts within the English tradition. These texts are intended to be representative, not all-inclusive, as examples of how authors framed their knowledge of their intended audience. Other records, including Hannah Woolley's seventeenth-century proscriptive literature and Brilliana Harley's diaries, document the ongoing usage of Herbals and other by women from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Parkinson dedicated his work to the reigning monarchs, Culpeper called upon his wife for assistance, and Blackwell provided support from scholars in order to establish her own credentials. All three texts were used within the Early Modern household for their medicinal information, but their initial intended audience, and their marketing strategies, demonstrate different concerns and coding to help their texts reach appropriate audiences.

John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (London: Lownes and Young, 1629), unnumbered introduction.

To the Queenes Most Excellent Maiestie Madame,

Knowing your Maiestie so much delighted with all the faire Flowers of a Garden, and furnished with them as farre beyond others, as you are eminent before them, this my Worke of a Garden, long before this intended to be published, and but now only finished, seemed as it were destined, to bee first offered into your Highnesse hands, as of right challenging the proprietie of Patronage from all others. Accept, I beseech your Maiestie, this speaking Garden, that may informe you in all the particulars of your store, as well as wants, when you cannot see any of them fresh upon the ground: and it shall further encourage him to accomplish the remainder; who, in praying that your Highnesse may enjoy the heavenly Paradise, after the many yeares fruition of this earthly, submitteth to be

Your Maiesties Inall

Humble devotion, John
Parkinson

Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Last Legacy left and bequeathed to his Dearest Wife* (London: N. Brooke, 1655), unnumbered introduction.

Master Culpepers Wifes Accompt.

Having in my Hands these my Husbands last experiences in Physick & Chyrurgery, &c. composed out of his dayly practice, which he laid a severe injunction on me to publish for the generall good after his decease; therefore to stop the mouths of malicious Persons, who may be apt to abuse and slander his labours, and to discharge that duty and debt of gratitude due to his name from one so neerly related to him, I do hereby testifie that the Copy of what is here printed is truly and really his owne, and was delivered to his trust among his choicest secrets upon his death-bed, and I do further approve the printing thereof, and having viewed them see nothing in them but what is his own. To the truth of all which I do here subscribe my hand.

A. Culpeper.

Worthy Readers,

My works have hitherto ben so well knowne unto you and have merited such just applause in the world, though envied by some illiterate Physitians, that I am the more confident to goe on doing that good which you have received by my former Labours...

This my last Peece the reserve of all the rest, I had never thought to have published, till now finding indisposition of body to be such as that I have no other way left to continue my owne fame, and that happy gratitude which I owe to my Country, but by publishing these my last Remaines, which I have left to my dearest Wife as my Legacy, being the choicest Secrets which I lockt up in my breast, and never made knowne in any of my former Workes.

And now Reader, to speak more fully in the praise of you, be confident what thou hast here is what I have gained by my constant practice and by which I have obtained a continuall reputation in the world, not doubting but you will receive that satisfaction and advantage which I was ever assured of my selfe; and now if it shall please Heaven to put a Period to my Life and studies, that I must bid all things under the Sun farewell; farewell my dearest Wife and Child; farewell Arts and Sciences; farewell all Worldly glories, Adiu Readers.

Nicholas Culpeper.

Elizabeth Blackwell, *A Curious Herbal* (London: Samuel Harding, 1737), unnumbered introduction.

Jos: Banks

This UNDERTAKING was honoured with the following Publick RECOMMENDATION by the Underscriven Gentlemen.

London, October 1. 1735.

We whose Names are underscriven, having seen a considerable Number of the DRAWINGS from which the PLATES are to be Engraved, and likewise some of the COLOUR'D PLANTS, think it a Justice done the PUBLICK to declare our Satisfaction with them, and our good Opinion of the Capacity of the Undertaker.

R. MEAD, M.D.	IA. DOUGLAS, M.D.	IOSEPH MILLER.
G.L. TEISSIER, M.D.	IAMES SHERARD, M.D.	ISAAC RAND.
ALEX ^R STUART, M.D.	W. CHESELDEN.	ROB. NICHOLLS.

Les PERSONNES sousignées ont bien voulu faire à l'AUTEUR de cet OUVRAGE l'honneur de lui donner leur APPROBATION de la maniere suivante.

Londres ce 1. Octobre, 1735.

Nous sousignés, ayant vu un assés grand nombre des DES'SIENS Sur lesquels on doit graver les PLANCHES, de même que quelques unes des PLANTES ENLUMINÉES, avons trouvé le tout si bien EXECUTE' que nous avons conçu une IDE'E avantageuse de la Capacité de l'Auteur, & nous avons tout lieu de croire que le PUBLIC recevra cet Ouvrage favorablement.

R MEAD, M.D.	IA. DOUGLAS, M.D.	IOSEPH MILLER.
G.L. TEISSIER, M.D.	IAMES SHERARD, M.D.	ISAAC RAND.
ALEX ^A STUART, M.D.	W. CHESELDEN.	ROB. NICHOLLS.

Gervase Markham, *The English House-Wife Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues which ought to be in a Compleat Woman* (London: Hannah Sawbridge, 1683), 1-4.

Markham produces this text (originally published in 1631) to provide useful information for the maintenance of the household, a few years after he wrote a similar text addressed to the English husband. He begins this volume with a discussion of the mother's role as the family's primary role model and physician.

Of the inward vertues of the mind, which ought to be in every House-wife. And first of her general knowledge both in Physick and Chirurgery, with plain approved medicines for health of the House-hold, also the extraction of excellent Oyls fit for those purposes.

Having already in a summary Briefness passed through those outward parts of Husbandry which belong unto the perfect Husbandman, who is the Father and Master of the Family, and whose Office and employments are ever for the most part abroad or removed from the house, as in the field or yard: It is now meet, that we descend in an orderly Method as we can, to the office of our *English House-wife*, who is the Mother and Mistress of the family, and hath her most general employments within the house; where from the general example of her vertues, and the most approved skill of her knowledge, those of her Family, may both learn to serve God, and sustain man in that godly and profitable sort, which is required of every true Christian...

To conclude, *our English Housewife* must be of chaste *thoughts*, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good Neighbour-hood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her Counsels, and generally skilful in the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation; of all or most whereof, I now in the ensuing discourse intend to speak more largely.

To begin then with one of the most principal vertues which do belong to our English House wife; you shall understand, that sith the preservation and care of the family touching their health and soundness of body consisteth most in the diligence of her, it is meet that she have a Physical kind of knowledge, how to admire any wholsom receipts or medicines for the good of their healths, as well to prevent the first occasion of sickness, as to take away the effects and evil of the same, when it hath made seizure on the body. Indeed we must confess, that the depth and secrets of this most excellent Art of Physick, are far beyond the capacity of the most skilful woman, as lodging only in the brest of learned Professors, yet that our Housewife may from them receive some ordinary rules & medicines, which may avail for the benefit of her family, is (in our common experience) no derogation at all to that worthy Art.

Neither do I intend here to load her mind with all the symtomes, accidents, & effects which go before or after every sickness, as though I would have her to assume the name of a Practitioner, but only relate unto her some approved medicines, and old Doctrines which have been gathered together, by two excellent and famous Physicians, and in a Manuscript given to a great worthy Countess of this Land, (for far be it from me to attribute this goodness unto mine own knowledge) & deliver'd by my common & ordinary experience, for the curing of those ordinary sicknesses which daily perturb the health of men and women.

“Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on Small Pox in Turkey” Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W—y M—e Written during Her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c. in Different Parts of Europe.* Aix: Anthony Henricy, 1796, 167-69, letter 36, to Mrs. S.C. from Adrianople, 1717.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) is known for her writings and correspondence while in Turkey with her husband the British Ambassador. She wrote of local customs and life in Constantinople, reporting on a regional practice of inoculation against smallpox and her decision to submit her son to the procedure.

The letter of Wortley Montagu portrays a clear antipathy to doctors and their dedication to patients' health. Her viewpoint likely derives from her experience with smallpox in 1715, which left her scarred and disfigured and her brother dead. Wortley Montagu recognizes a medical or healing authority outside of Westernized medicine, as well as the authority of mothers in making medical decisions. Although she did not introduce inoculation in Western Europe, she did popularize inoculation upon her return to England by having her daughter publicly inoculated and advocating for the royal family to adopt the practice. Inoculation would be a controversial subject in the West, stressing ideas of authority in health, throughout the eighteenth century until it was replaced with the equally contested practice of vaccination after 1798.

A propos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing, that will make you wish yourself here. The small-pox, so fatal, and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless, by the invention of engrafting, which is the term they give it. There is a set of old women, who make it their business to perform the operation, every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox; they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together) the old woman comes with a nut-shell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox, and asks what vein you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her, with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch) and puts into the vein as much matter as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after that, binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell, and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, one in each arm, and one on the breast, to mark the sign of the Cross; but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who chuse to have them in the legs, or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health to the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark, and in eight days time they are as well as before their illness. Where they are wounded, there remains running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year, thousands undergo this operation, and the French Ambassador says pleasantly, that they take the small-pox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it, and you may believe I am well satisfied of the safety of this experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son. I am patriot enough to take the pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England, and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it, if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue, for the good of mankind. But that distemper is too beneficial to them, not to expose to all their resentment, the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it.

Perhaps if I live to return, I may, however, have courage to war with them. Upon this occasion, admire the heroism in the heart of

Your friend, etc. etc

Correspondence between John Adams and Abigail Smith Adams in relation to smallpox and inoculation

We chose two letters from the famed American couple as it reveals not only the global level of concern about smallpox and the possibilities for public health with inoculation, but also the different individuals involved in the procedure. It reveals the overlapping networks of discussion and decision-making that goes across genders and professions.

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Smith, 13 April 1764

[Boston, 13 April 1764]

My dearest

We arrived at Captn. Cunninghams, about Twelve O'Clock and sent our Compliments to Dr. Perkins. The Courier returned with Answer that the Dr. was determined to inoculate no more without a Preparation preevious to Inoculation. That We should have written to him and have received Directions from him, and Medicine, before We came into Town. I was surprized and chagrined. I wrote, instantly, a Letter to him, and informed him we had been under a Preparation of his prescribing, and that I presumed Dr. Tufts had informed him, that We depended on him, in Preference to any other Gentleman. The Dr. came, immediately with Dr. Warren, in a Chaise – And after an Apology, for his not Recollecting-(I am obliged to break off my Narration, in order to swallow a Porringer of Hasty Pudding and Milk. I have done my Dinner) -- for not recollecting what Dr. Tufts had told him, Dr. Perkins demanded my left Arm and Dr. Warren my Brothers. They took their Launcetts and with their Points divided the skin for about a Quarter of an Inch and just suffering the Blood to appear, buried a Thread about (half) a Quarter of an Inch long in the Channell. A little Lint was then laid over the scratch and a Piece of a Ragg pressed on, and then a Bandage bound over all -- my Coat and waistcoat put on, and I was bid to go where I get and do what I pleased. (Dont you think the Dr. has a good Deal of Confidence in my Discretion, thus to leave me to it?)

The Doctors have left us Pills red and black to take Night and Morning. But they looked very sagaciously and importantly at us, and ordered my Brother, larger Doses than me, on Account of the Difference in our Constitutions. Dr. Perkins is a short, thick sett, dark Complexioned, [*illegible*] Yet pale Faced, Man, (Pale faced I say, which I was glad to see, because I have a great Regard for a Pale Face, in any Gentleman of Physick, [*illegible*] Divinity or Law. It indicates search and study). Gives himself the alert, chearful Air and [*illegible*] Behaviour of a Physician, not forgetting the solemn, important and wise. Warren is a pretty, tall, Genteel, fair faced young Gentleman. Not quite so much Assurance in his Address, as Perkins, (perhaps because Perkins was present) Yet shewing fully that he knows the Utility thereof, and that he will soon, practice it in full Perfection.

The Doctors, having finished the Operation and left Us, their Directions and Medicines, took their Departure in infinite Haste, depend on't.

I have one Request to make, which is that you would be very careful in making Tom, Smoke all the Letters from me, very faithfully, before you, or any of the Family reads them. For, altho I shall never fail to smoke them myself before sealing, Yet I fear the Air of this House will be too much infected, soon, to be absolutely without Danger, and I would not you should take the Distemper, by Letter from me, for Millions. I write at a Desk far removed from any sick Room, and shall use all the Care I can, but too much cannot be used.

I have written thus far, and it is 45 Minutes Past one O Clock and no more.

My Love to all. My hearty Thanks to Mamma for her kind Wishes. My Regards as due to Pappa, and should request his Prayers, which are always becoming, and especially at such Times, when We are undertaking any Thing of Consequence as the small Pox, undoubtedly, tho, I have not the Least Apprehension att all of what is called Danger.

I am as ever Yr. John Adams

Boston July 13, 1776

I must begin with apologising to you for not writing since the 17 of June [[Abigail to John, 17 June 1776](#)]. I have really had so many cares upon my Hands and Mind, with a bad inflammation in my Eyes that I have not been able to write. I now date from Boston where I yesterday arrived and was with all 4 of our Little ones inoculated for the small pox. My unkle and Aunt were so kind as to send me an invitation with my family. Mr. Cranch and wife and family, My Sister Betsy and her Little Neice, Cotton Tufts and Mr. Thaxter, a maid who has had the Distemper and my old Nurse compose our family. A Boy too I should have added. 17 in all. My unkles maid with his Little daughter and a Negro Man are here. We had our Bedding &c. to bring. A Cow we have driven down from [Braintree] and some Hay I have had put into the Stable, wood &c. and we have really commenced housekeepers here. The House was furnished with almost every article (except Beds) which we have free use of, and think ourselves much obliged by the fine accommodations and kind offer of our Friends. All our necessary Stores we purchase jointly. Our Little ones stood the operation Manfully. Dr. Bulfinch is our Physician. Such a Spirit of inoculation never before took place; the Town and every House in it, as are as full as they can hold. I believe there are not less than 30 persons from Braintree. Mrs. Quincy, Mrs.

Lincoln, Miss Betsy and Nancy are our near Neighbours. God Grant that we may all go comfortably thro the Distemper, the phisick part is bad enough I know. I knew your mind so perfectly upon the subject that I thought nothing, but our recovery would give you eaqel pleasure, and as to safety there was none. The Soldiers inoculated privately, so did many of the inhabitants and the paper currency spread it everywhere. I immediately determined to set myself about it, and get ready with my children. I wish it was so you could have been with us, but I submit.

...Poor Canady I lament Canady but we ought to be in some measure sufferers for the past folly of our conduct. The fatal effects of the small pox there, has led almost every person to consent to Hospitals in every Town. In many Towns, already arround Boston the Selectmen [*illegible*] have granted Liberty for inoculation. I hope the necessity is now fully seen.

I had many disagreeable Sensations at the Thoughts of comeing myself, but to see my children thro it I thought my duty, and all those feelings vanished as soon as I was inoculated and I trust a kind providence will carry me safely thro. Our Friends from Plymouth came into Town yesterday. We have enough upon our hands in the morning. The Little folks are very sick then and puke every morning but after that they are comfortable. I shall write you now very often. ...

I hope the Multiplicity of cares and avocations which you will not be too powerfull for you. I have many anxietyes upon that account. Nabby and Johnny send duty and desire Mamma to say that an inflammation in their Eyes which has been as much of a distemper as the small pox, has prevented their writing, but they hope soon to be able to acquaint Pappa of their happy recovery from the Distemper. - - Mr. [Cranch] and wife, Sister [Betsy] and all our Friends desire to be rememberd to you and foremost in that Number stands your

Portia

PS A little India herb would have been mighty agreeable now.

Excerpts from:

- Francis Howgrave, *Reasons against the inoculation of the small-pox...* (London, 1724).
- J. Crawford, *The Case of Inoculating the Small-Pox Consider'd...* (London, 1722).

The following four excerpts on inoculation against smallpox were part of a prolonged and virulent debate of the introduction of the procedure across the West, from England to Boston to Russia, throughout the eighteenth century. The debate involved a range of perspectives and individuals, from natural philosophers to clergymen to physicians to government officials to mothers and fathers. Nor could the position of an individual be assumed by their affiliation to one or more groups. As you will read, much of the debate whether in the early years in England or when it re-erupted in France in the 1760s, revolved around the issue of medical authority and women. This extends from the nature of smallpox to who should decide treatment or implement the procedure. We can also see a glimpse of the contentious nature of the debate and professionalization of medicine in the eighteenth century.

Francis Howgrave, *Reasons against the inoculation of the small-pox...* pg. 67-68

The Small-Pox in the Natural Way very rarely affects Life, where the Habit of Body and Constitution are good; and this can easily be prov'd from a much longer Observation, and more numerous Instances, than the Inoculators are able to give us from their Scheme: I would then know, where lyes the Advantage of conveying a Distemper by Force, into a found healthful Body, whose good Constitution might perhaps preserve it from Infection in the Natural Way, or at least can hardly (with good Management) fail to preserve it in this Distemper, when ever Nature, (without this Artificial Violence) inclines them to it?

But by this Rule of Inoculating only Those who are of the best Constitutions, you propose only to preserve Such, whom in a Natural Way, an ignorant Greek Woman can scarcely destroy.

Thus, Sir, you have taken away the Universal Benefit from this Method, which the Inoculators in their great Modesty, us'd to flatter and amuse Mankind withal, and obligingly sav'd me the Trouble of confuting their false Assertions.

For if Persons of bad Constitutions be excluded, along with those of weak ones, (as confess'dly they are by this Precaution,) I am persuaded, far the greatest Part of the English Nation, (and especially those of the better Sort) cannot enjoy the Benefit of it: For, Persons whose Fortunes raise them above the common Standard, are too apt to fall in with the Fashion of the Times, and indulge their Pallates with strong Wines, and Food toss'd up with high Sauces, rather than content themselves with a plain and simple Diet, which is much more nourishing, and less subject to inflame the Blood. So that according to this Position, there are infinitely more improper than fit Subjects for Inoculation.

I would now beg leave to ask these learned Mimics, of a few ignorant Greek Women, two Questions.

First, Whether Inoculation, is not in their Opinion the most gentle and safe Manner of having the Small-Pox?

And secondly, Whether a Person of a weak Constitution, or a bad Habit of Body, be not as liable, if no more so, to receive the Small-Pox by Infection as the most healthful can be?...

J. Crawford (M.D.), *The Case of Inoculating the Small-Pox Consider'd, And its Advantages Asserted; in a Review of Dr. Wagstaff'es Letter. Wherein Every Thing that Author has advanced against it, is fully Confuted; And Inoculation proved a Safe, Beneficial and Laudable Practice.* (London, 1722), pgs. 6-7.

Are you in Earnest when you say * That *the Accounts we have of these Things are given us by those who are no Physicians, and have not the least Knowledge of Distempers?* And that *the Country from when we deriv'd this Experiment will have but little Influence on our Faith, if we consider either the Nature of the Climate, or the Capacity of the Inhabitants?* Are *Timoni* and *Pylarini* no Physicians? And have not *Boylston, Nettleton, Maitland, etc*, the least knowledge of Distempers? But pray, what influence can Time or Place have on the Disquisitions of a Philosopher? Do you then judge of Opinions by such circumstantial Authorities? And are Matters of Physical proper Objects of *Faith*? Are not you the Person who just now pleaded that *Physicians, of all Men ought to be principally guided by Experience?* And do you already Quarrel with that Experience, and sullenly Complain of want of Authority to influence your Faith? Pray tell me, does the Place where, and the Persons by whom a Discovery was made, affect the intrinsic Value thereof? Or does it become a *Man of Skill*, * to be determin'd by such Considerations?

But Now you get the *Court* in view, and raising yourself a little, aim at something that you think looks like Satyr. *Posterity*, say you, *perhaps will scarcely be brought to believe, that na Experiment practic'd only by a few ignorant Wo-men, amongst an illiterate and unthinking People, should, on a sudden, and upon slender Experience, so far obtain in one of the politest Nations in the World, as to be receiv'd into the Royal Palace.* In order to furnish out this notable Stroak of Raillery, you are forc'd to conjure up I don't know what *ignorant Women*: Whence they are to come, I can't divine, for neither you nor I ever heard of above one concern'd in Inoculation; nor was she, it seems so very Ignorant, but that Dr. *Pylarini* himself, owns he was not asham'd to receive her Instructions. Indeed, as to the Point of Ignorance, I appeal to the World, whether that Old Woman, or *** talks better Sense, and more consistently on the Subjet of Inoculation. I shou'd think, however, the Experience of Time immemorial among the *Georgians* and *Circassians*, of forty Years at *Constantinople*, where *Timoni* assures us it has been practic'd with happy Success, join'd to what we have had at *Boston*, and even among ourselves, should not seem so *slender*, but that a Prince who reeiv'd it into his PAalce on such Encouragement, might have escap'd the Petulancy of your Pen.

But I han't yet done with this Passage.. Inoculation, it seems, was only practic'd *by ignorant Women, and among an illiterate and unthinking People, 'till it was receiv'd into the Royale Palace.* Say you so? Are *Timoni, Pylarini, Boylston, Maitland*, etc ignorant Women? And are our Fellow-Subjects of *New-England* an illiterate and unthinking People? That must be your Meaing, if you had any at all...

Images of inoculation or vaccination demonstrating the perceived actors in the decision to inoculation and their relationship to each other.

Paintings below in order:

- Desbordes, Constant Joseph. *Baron Jean Louis Alibert performing vaccination against smallpox in the Chateau of Liancourt*, 1820. Oil on Canvas.
- Boilly, Louis-Leopold Boilly. *The Vaccination*, 1807. Oil on canvas. London, The Wellcome Library.
- Board, Ernest. *Dr. Jenner performing his first vaccination*, 1796, 1899. Oil painting.





Wet-nurse advertisements from London and Philadelphia newspapers, 18th century

Physicians and other public officials conducted maternal nursing campaigns in England and the colonies as a way to reduce infant mortality. However, many children were still fed by wet-nurses rather than their mothers and these ads give us a glimpse into the stakes both parties placed on these intimate arrangements. Below we have included advertisements placed by middle-class and elite householders looking for wet-nurses to breastfeed their children. These are followed by advertisements placed by working-class mothers hoping to secure employment as wet-nurses. Try to identify the coded language used by both parties describing their circumstances and their intents. Also note how economic imperatives may have shaped women's decisions about their infant's nutrition.

Advertisements Placed By Elite/Middling Householders:

WANTED immediately, a wet NURSE, with a good breast of milk, either to live in a gentleman's family, to take the charge of a child. Any such person that can be well recommended for honesty, health, cleanliness, and care, may hear of good wages, by applying to the Printers hereof. [July 30, 1767, Pennsylvania Gazette, Philadelphia]

WET NURSE. Wanted at a Village, a few miles from town, a healthy young Woman, that will be willing to take a Child, in about three weeks from this time; she must live reputably, and whose character will bear the strictest enquiry; her husbands must follow some handicraft business. For further particulars apply to Mr. Watkins, at No. 8, Hanover-street, Long-acre, who will refer to the principle. [Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser, London, July 29, 1783]

WANTED... AS WET-NURSE, a healthy looking Woman, with a good breast of milk, whose character will bear the strictest enquiry. A person of this description, if approved of, will have good wages. Enquire this day, or tomorrow, about the hour of twelve forenoon, at No. 17, Upper Marybone-street, near Portland Chapel. None need apply whose milk is not wholesome and young. [London World, Jan 29, 1787]

WANTED, a Wet-Nurse, in an airy part of London; she must be a married woman.-- Enquire at Mr. Smyth, Apothecary, No. 15, Tavistock-street, Covent garden. [Morning Herald, London, April 4, 1799]

Advertisements Placed By Working-Class Mothers:

WANTED A WET NURSE's Place for A Young Woman, of Twenty-two Years of Age, with a good Breast of Milk; her Child is two Months old, and she proposes to put it out; She can have a very good Character. Please to inquire at Mr. Dunnant's, Lapidary in King-street, St. Ann's, Soho, by the French Change. [London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette, September 21, 1751]

WANTS a Wet-Nurse's Place, a healthy Woman, who can be extremely well recommended by the Lady whose Child she has suckled five Months) for Tenderness of her Charge, and good Behaviour in the Family; her own Child is dead, and was only one Month old when she came to her Place; she has no Followers, and her Husband is not living. Please to enquire for S. H. at Mr. Chamber's, in St. Alban's Street. [Daily Advertiser, London, October 2, 1772]

WET NURSE. A Young Woman of good character would be glad to take a child to suckle; has a good breast of milk; her child is only 5 months old, which she would wean immediately. She is come of a good family: her husband is gone to sea.

Whoever this may suit, may be informed of every particular necessary to be known, by making application to Mr. Sherwin, tallow-chandler, in Drury-lane, near Long Acre. [Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser, May 1, 1780, London]

A WET NURSE in the bloom of health, would choose to suckle a child in a respectable family; her milk is but seven months old; she will be a great acquisition to any family that wants her, and will be well recommended, particularly as she lately restored a child to perfect healthy, that was reduced to the last extremity, occasioned by bad nursing. For further particulars inquire of the printers. [Independent Gazeteer, April 19, 1782, Philadelphia]

WANTS a Place, a young Woman, with a good breast of milk, who is going to wean her child, after having it suck eight months, and wishes to take home a child to wet- nurse, from any genteel family. The situation is very airy and healthy, and can be well recommended. Please to direct for M. P. No. 9, Oxford-street, will be respectfully attended to. [London World, April 30, 1787]

A Young Woman wants a Place as WET-NURSE in a genteel family; her child may be put out immediately if required. Enquire for Mr. L. No. 8, Queen-street, Soho. [May 1, 1793, The Star, London]

Ferris, Samuel. *A dissertation on milk...* [London], [1785]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University at Buffalo Libraries - SUNY. 14 Dec. 2017: 1 page.

It perhaps would not be difficult to prove likewise, that to pervert the intention of Nature is, in no one instance, of so fatal a tendency, as in a mother's prohibiting her little innocent from the use of [her breast], to which is has so exclusive a claim. And a woman who can and does not suckle her own child, frequently becomes not only the author of well-deserved misery to herself; but, which should not concern her less, of innumerable ills to her own progeny: and these may not indeed stop with the first generation, but in all human probability, may be handed down from generation to generation hereditarily for ever.

“When a mother does not nurse her own infant,” said a very learned author, who was an equally skillful physician and good man, “she does an open violence to nature; a violence unknown among all the inferior animals, who Nature intended to

suckle their young; unknown among the most barbarous nations; and equally unknown among the most barbarous nations; and equally unknown among the most polished in the purest ages of Greece and Rome. ...

If neither maternal fondness, nor the dread of entailing disease on posterity can so influence the conduct of a woman, as to restrain her from the neglect of her own infant; it is a circumstance of wonder, that apprehension with regard to her own safety should not induce her, however involuntarily, to perform in some measure a mother's duty.

I believe that there is a great reason to fear, that some women are actuated by the ridiculous species of vanity, which renders them more apprehensive of impairing their shape, than they are conscious of the danger of losing their lives. And hence they sacrifice, when it is their misfortune to bear children, all the tender feelings which a mother should possess, and oppose with violence the voice of Nature. ...

It was the opinion of the late Dr. Hunter, that a very considerable proportion of those unfortunate women, who are afflicted with cancers of the breasts, are such as refuse to nurse their own children. Even the absurd custom of debarring the infant from the use of the breast for three or four days after birth, or until the breasts swell, or the milk flows spontaneously, is often productive of very serious, if not fatal consequences to the mother. Then how much greater must be the danger of total suppression? ...

The first instance, which I ever saw of the bad effects arising from repelling milk... She was a young woman of an elegant form, and of a delicate constitution; and on being delivered of her first child, was as happy in every circumstance as a woman could be. About the third day after her delivery, her breasts became full and turgid, and she was extremely anxious of becoming the nurse of her own infant. But, to gratify the absurd request of her husband, who was erroneously fearful of the effects of nursing upon his wife's beauty, she sacrificed all the nice feelings of a fond mother, and gave her child to be suckled by a stranger... her breasts became swelled, extremely painful and inflamed; and the consequent fever was attended with dangerous symptoms. There were indeed at length conquered by medical assistance: but her misery ended not here. An abscess supervened the inflammation in one of her breasts, and a long continued drain from this reduced her from a low state, to the lowest ebb of weakness, so that it was with difficulty she was preserved, notwithstanding she could command every care and attention.

Excerpts from two unpublished letters, one from the *Meredith Family Papers*, and another from the *Drinker Family Papers*, both collections housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Due to increased interest in public health, eighteenth-century women were pressured to breastfeed their own babies more than mothers had in centuries past. The following letters suggest that mothers were torn by the urgency of maternal nursing advocates, the opinions of their own mothers, friends and physicians, and their personal desire to breastfeed their children. They also portray the social aspect of eighteenth-century medicine, when physicians' advice to their patients was influenced by intervening loved ones.

Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker to her sister Mary Sandwith

My dear Sister,

Bristol, July 13, 1771

...I was not quite so well yesterday, as usual, and my dear Henry's coming to me so unwell gave me pain. I am quite bravely today after coming out of the water, but full of thought about my dear little crowing Henry. Doct. D. came here last evening, and after the usual Salutation, said he had come to have some serious talk with me; I smiled; nay said he I am in earnest; about what Doctor?—weaning your little Son; Such a hearty growing boy, who seems to live upon you is enough to draw a pain in a weakly person where there had never been one before, besides he keeps you waking at night and prevents your using means that might restore you; it if was not on his account you might now go with Mr. Drinker to the sea shore, and so forth.

There are several women here who I believe have put it into the Doctor's head that I ought not to suckle the Child. My Henry Seconded him, and said he would write this morning to thee, but as he was poorly, I undertook to do it. Do not think my dear, from what I have written, that I am worse; indeed I am not through mercy, but have had the pain in my breast oftener than I had sometime ago. I believe that if I have a girl with me that was worth a fig, it would be different for the one I have has no knack of making the Child fond of her. Doct. D. says as Doct. Evans knows my constitution, he would have him spoken to. I wish thee would see the Doctor and talk with him. ...

I had a room full of visitors yesterday afternoon; two Chariotts full besides others... We all went in the evening to Bath. I go but little a visiting and they all think that my little dear keeps me at home, and every ones cry is wean him, wean him, thee would be charmed to see the dear little fellow, how he daily impresses in cunning antick tricks....

E. Drinker

Gertrude Gouverneur Ogden Meredith to her husband William Meredith

Thursday Morning, Vale of Content

June 28, 1798

To have excited one apprehension in my dear husband's mind has given me real uneasiness. I certainly never intended it, nor could have done it with any justice, for our little Gertrude is evidently as well as ever she was, and myself better than I have been this Summer, but extremely thin notwithstanding. Mama tells me this is owing to my suckling my Child. She is very anxious that I should wean her, but this I cannot think of doing, as I am confident if I did, I should sacrifice her health which is infinitely dearer than my own. Therefore I shall disregard every persuasion that my friends here use, and it is indeed the general opinion that she ought to be weaned....

Excerpts from Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, and Elaine Forman Crane. *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.

Philadelphian Elizabeth Drinker was a Quaker wife and mother of eight who kept a diary over the course of 50 years, rarely missing a day. She was also chronically ill. The following excerpts suggest that her daily life was consumed with thoughts of the health of her husband, children and friends. She exercised considerable influence over the treatment of illness and injury within her family, especially later in life when she had more leisure time. She felt strongly about the authority of trained physicians but weighed their advice against common sense and her own expertise largely drawn from her copy of William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine, or the Family Physician*.

1763

Febry. 6: 1763—First Day Afternoon very unwell, Miscarried, Sally, Innoculated, last sixth-Day. 8 Weeks gone, when it happn'd.

March 24, 1763, Becky James, last Night Miscarried of a Daughter—HD. was let blood to Day—Hannah also—March 30th, 1763.

Sepr. 19; Busy all Day: Cleaning House, went this Evening to see Catty Howell, who Miscarried last seventh Day, and have been very ill.

1791

[July] 5... Nancy has, by Dr. Kuhn's advice diped her daughters in cold water this morning 'tho I generally revere the Doctors opinion, in this I must be excused, a poor little creature, whose bowels have been for a long time much disorder'd by cutting teeth, which are now all through, and might get better without to severe an operation.—I don't like this kill or cure work...

1797

Janry. 15.... My cough very hard in the night tho I had taken 45 drops Asthmatic Ellixor—I took a dose Castor Oyl at 11 this forenoon... Jacob Downings Dan came near 10 at night to borrow Buchans family physician, he says his mistresses cough is worse again—poor Sally—

[August] 4... Oliver was here this evening to borrow Buchans family Physician for Nancy, as she thinks Eleanor has worms—a poor little weakly thing—her mother has much trouble with her.

1798

18... HD. Done down to Sammy Rhoadss [son-in-law] this evening he tells me that Molly[youngest daughter] has been blooded this forenoon by the advice of the Doctor and seems better, he did not ask what Doctor. I hope 'twas Shippen as he is to officiate. – It is extrordinary I was not sent for...

Octor. 2... The other letter from John Skyrin giving an afflicting account of a bad hurt my poor dear Sally [eldest daughter] has received She went out accompany'd by Sammy and Jane Downing, in search of grapes, and was by the breaking of the Saddle girth thrown off one of the Coach horses, and received a very severe bruse on her Arm near the Elbow, the hight and violence of the fall caused a fracture to be apprehended but upon examination the Doctor pronounced it no

more than a bad bruise which is hoped by his skill and attention will be attended with no future bad consequences...

Novr. 7... Jacob Downing and Nancy Skyrin [middle daughter and son-in-law] din'd here—the weather is so temperate that many are fearful that the return of the inhabitants may increase the cases of Yallow fever... William [son] went out this evening he return'd about 8 o'clock and inform'd me that Molly Rhoads had a swelling in her breast, by a cold she has taken—I am too unwell to go down, having took medicine, and a bad cold in my head. I sent her a note advising her to send for Dr. Kuhn, as I was not qualified to advise her, she sent word back that Sammy was gone to Nurse Cross, and what she advised, she would do: had I known that she would not send for the Doctor I should have undertaken to advise something—I don't wonder she has taken cold, coming home in the damp, and going into a fresh house so soon after her lying in. —a dislocated Elbow, such as Sally's, might have been easily reduced, had she had a skillful person to deal with—it has occur'd to me that the Doctor was apprehensive the bone was fractured.

Novr. 8 ...Saml. Rhoads called. Molly, he says is better, -- Dr. Kuhn called, I told him of Sallys situation, he seems to think her Elbow cannot be easily reduced; it is so long since the hurt; he went, from hence to visit little Eleanor Skyrin, advised Elixor Vitrol for her. I went down to Mollys, her breast is better, Doctr. Kuhn told me she should get blooded and use lead-water, the lump is softer and east, she has a plaster on it which Nurse Cross sent her, I should have been better pleased to have sent for the Doctor and follow'd his directions—she has plenty of Milk; a pretty little plump Child, good humoured and in good health. I have not seen it before, it is a month old this day; dined there in the chamber with Sammy and Molly. came home to tea, Nancy and Children took tea here. Eleanor [granddaughter by Nancy] went home with her Mother, Elizabeth [granddaughter by Sally] stays here and sleeps with her Uncle: Dr. Redman called while I was out—Besty Fordham here this evening.

1800

[January] 30... our Jacobs [servant] wifes mother came to tell us that their little one was very ill with an oppression like the hives, I gave her an onion and some deers suit, and desired her to go to the Doctor at the Despensary [center for medical relief for the poor] for advice...

1803

[March] 15: Two or 3 days ago I had a plaster of Burgundy pitch put between my Shoulders. Dr. Buchan [via his text, *Domestic Medicine*] says it is of more use in a cough than many would imagine, it begins to itch, which is no bad symptom.