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Hives of Sickness

Public Health and Epidemics in New York City

Edited by David Rosner

DESCRIPTION

An 1865 report on public health in New York painted a grim picture of "high brick blocks and closely-packed houses . . . literally hives of sickness" propagating epidemics of cholera, smallpox, typhoid, typhus, and yellow fever, which swept through the whole city. In this stimulating collection of essays, nine historians of American medicine explore New York's responses to its public health crises from colonial times to the present. The essays illustrate the relationship between the disease environment of New York and changes in housing, population, social conditions, and the success of medical science, linking such factors to New York's experiences with smallpox, polio, and AIDS.

The volume is essential reading for anyone interested in American public health and the social history of New York.

The contributors are Ronald Bayer, Elizabeth Blackmar, Gretchen A. Condran, Elizabeth Fee, Daniel M. Fox, Evelyn M. Hammonds, Alan M. Kraut, Judith Walzer Leavitt, and Naomi Rogers. David Rosner is a professor of history at Baruch College and The Graduate School of the City University of New York. Robert R. Macdonald is the director of the Museum of the City of New York.

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Choice Reviews 1995 November

This is one of a series of books focusing on the impact of disease intended to enhance the understanding of both past and present regarding reactions to periodic epidemics. Robert B. Macdonald, director of the Museum of the City of New York, which supports this series, states: "The individual and collective responses to widespread sickness are mirrors to the cultural, religious, economic, political, and social histories of cities and nations." Rosner selected eight renowned and respected individuals to describe the reactions and responses to smallpox, polio, and AIDS epidemics in New York City since 1860, and the efforts of officials and professionals to deal with the impact of disease. Essayists present disease broadly from economic, social, political, and health perspectives. Causes of epidemics include the expected and usual: thousands of immigrants pouring into the city, inadequate water

and food supplies, lack of sewage disposal, unemployment leading to poverty. An unexpected cause was the avarice of real estate investors, inexorably driving up housing costs.

Highly recommended for all students of history, public health, health policy, and sociology. Upper-division undergraduate through professional.
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