



Medical Incunabula *provides the whole range of medical incunables in one resource for the first time, from classical and Arabic texts to medieval authors and authors of the 15th century. The collection allows researchers and scholars to trace the development of medieval medical knowledge across different texts and authors, and compare various editions, sometimes in different languages, of the same medical text. Drawing on holdings widely dispersed across the world, the collection includes many texts previously beyond the reach of most scholars.*

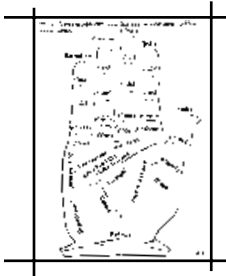
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# INCUNABULA: THE PRINTING REVOLUTION IN EUROPE, 1455-1500

Units 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 21: *Medical Incunabula*

**Primary Source Microfilm**  
*an imprint of the Gale Group*



# INCUNABULA: THE PRINTING REVOLUTION IN EUROPE, 1455-1500

## Units 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 21: *Medical Incunabula*

Introduction: Mr Peter Jones (Librarian, King's College, Cambridge)

Selection: Dr Lotte Hellinga (Former Deputy Keeper, the British Library)

### Medical Thought and Practice

Of all the categories of incunabula, medical works attracted probably the widest audience. Whereas incunables dealing with subjects such as philosophy or law were aimed solely at the more educated classes, medical advice was sought by practitioners and sufferers at all social levels, from the learned university scholar to the illiterate commoner. This is reflected in the immense diversity of medical texts published by the early printers.

There was a great market among learned doctors for scholarly medical works. These texts had been transmitted over many centuries through Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and Latin. There was much demand for printed editions of the classical and Arabic texts that remained integral to medical learning in the 15th century. Medieval authors were crucial to the teaching of surgery and anatomy. Printers also published contemporary works, particularly the new collections of 'consilia', or medical advice literature, which contributed to an important shift away from the medieval practice of scholastic theorizing, by adapting precepts to individual cases.

There was also a tremendous demand among lay readers for simplified vernacular versions of the key texts on practical medicine. The Black Death gave added impetus to the development of literature that popularized learned medicine. Bloodletting and purgation calendars comprise the most common type of text produced. Newer forms of medical writing, such as specialized treatises on particular ailments, also began to appear. In addition, printers catered for the less literate by producing broadsides that gave basic medical advice. Treatises and broadsides on the plague were especially popular; it is possible through these documents to trace the terrible impact of new diseases on 15th-century culture.

This collection includes works from more than 20 libraries across the world, including the British Library, the Royal College of Physicians, the Wellcome Historical Medical Library and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München. It is an invaluable resource for scholars interested in the history of medicine and science as well as researchers tracing the impact of disease and plague. These texts also provide insights on aspects of 15th-century thought on subjects such as mortality, the body and social relationships.

### Highlights of *Medical Incunabula*

Among the notable items included in *Medical Incunabula* are:

#### Classical and Arabic texts

- Galen's "Therapeutica" in Greek (Venice, 1500) — the first attempt at an edition of the greatest medical authority in his own language, which virtually bankrupted the publishers
- Johannes Trechsel's edition of a translation of Avicenna's "Canon medicinae"

#### Medieval texts

- Mondino de' Luzzi's "Anathomia" — the key text for 15th-century anatomy
- Vernacular translations of works by surgeon Gui de Chauliac

#### Authors of the 15th century

- Contemporary works on the plague and syphilis
- Antonio Guaineri's treatises on ailments of the head and other parts of the body
- Marsilio Ficino's treatise on the illnesses of scholars
- The "Fasciculus medicinae", traditionally ascribed to Johannes de Ketham (Venice, 1491) — a compendium of practical medical knowledge and the most beautiful medical book printed in the 15th century
- The Mainz bloodletting calendar of 1457 — the first medical text in print in the only surviving copy, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Unit 11: 368 fiche, 56 titles

Unit 12: 365 fiche, 75 titles

Unit 13: 317 fiche, 75 titles

Unit 14: 318 fiche, 66 titles

Unit 15: 296 fiche, 83 titles

Unit 21: 370 fiche, 97 titles

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