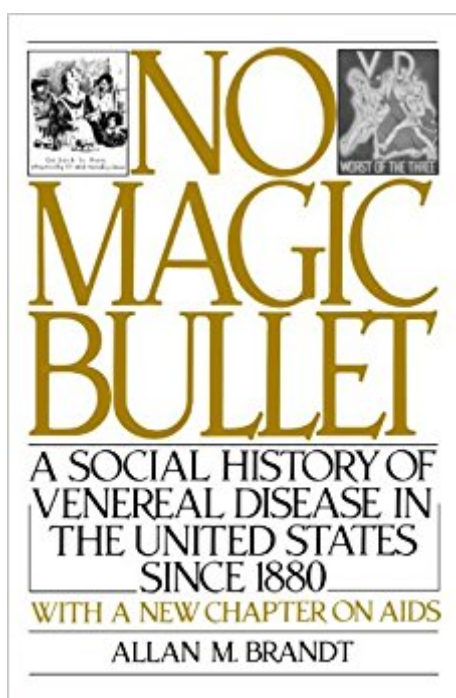


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# No Magic Bullet: A Social History Of Venereal Disease In The United States Since 1880 (Oxford Paperbacks)



## Synopsis

From Victorian anxieties about syphilis to the current hysteria over herpes and AIDS, the history of venereal disease in America forces us to examine social attitudes as well as purely medical concerns. In *No Magic Bullet*, Allan M. Brandt recounts the various medical, military, and public health responses that have arisen over the years--a broad spectrum that ranges from the incarceration of prostitutes during World War I to the establishment of required premarital blood tests. Brandt demonstrates that Americans' concerns about venereal disease have centered around a set of social and cultural values related to sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class. At the heart of our efforts to combat these infections, he argues, has been the tendency to view venereal disease as both a punishment for sexual misconduct and an index of social decay. This tension between medical and moral approaches has significantly impeded efforts to develop "magic bullets"--drugs that would rid us of the disease--as well as effective policies for controlling the infections' spread. In the paper edition of *No Magic Bullet*, Brandt adds to his perceptive commentary on the relationship between medical science and cultural values a new chapter on AIDS. Analyzing this latest outbreak in the context of our previous attitudes toward sexually transmitted diseases, he hopes to provide the insights needed to guide us to the policies that will best combat the disease.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A welcome addition to the growing literature related to sex in American history....It is a major contribution to both medical and social history."--*American Historical Review*"Brandt bases his case

on a well-documented analysis of public policy concerning venereal diseases during the last one hundred years....No Magic Bullet deserves a broad audience."--Journal of American History"Brandt has served up an analytical feast....No Magic Bullet may remain the definitive social history of [venereal disease] for many years to come."--Bulletin of the History of Medicine"A significant contribution to our understanding of public responses to STDs in the United States....Useful and timely."--Arthur R. Williams, University of Florida, Gainesville"An audacious examination of American attitudes toward sexually transmitted disease...A chilling reminder of a forgotten history."--The Village Voice"An excellent short treatment of venereal disease in this country. It is clearly written and with the addition of the chapter on AIDS, most appropriate and updated."--William A. Sodeman, Jr., M.D., University of Southern Florida, Tampa"A thoroughly researched...intriguing book...Brandt argues persuasively that many of the underlying attitudes of the Victorian period continue to hinder the control of venereal diseases."--Philadelphia Inquirer"A subtle and convincing book...an eloquent chapter in the history of sex in America."--Psychology Today"Well-researched, accurate, and clearly written...This historical perspective has much to offer readers in the fields of public health and infectious disease at a time when important policy decisions regarding the control of AIDS must be made."--New England Journal of Medicine"A major contribution to the social history of medicine and public policy in the United States."--Isis

This book is devoted to tracing the historical record of this distinctive set of infectious diseases from the late nineteenth century to current epidemics of herpes and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

No Magic Bullet creates a very detailed, extremely well researched volume on the evolution of healthcare. The progression through the various phases of modern thought may seem entertaining or absurd in hindsight yet Brandt very carefully recreates the time period making the rise and fall of each idea seem appropriate, regardless of their absurdity. If you are looking for an entertaining read, look elsewhere. No Magic Bullet is geared towards academics or professionals. It is not a difficult volume but it is not a whimsical read either. The level of detail and research put into this text indicate a profound passion and understanding of medicine in the proper historical context. I'll agree with the first review, some of the information may seem dated, but if you're writing about history it makes little difference. If you're looking for cutting edge information on AIDS and the developments made in the past ten years; look elsewhere. But if you want a social progression spanning through some of medicine's interesting periods this is an excellent resource. I highly recommend this volume

for anyone that might be remotely interested in sociology, healthcare, or history.

An outstanding chronicle of a fading scourge. Amazingly well referenced.

This was a really interesting examination of disease and morality in the United States, as well as how these shift in response to social changes, such as immigration.

Interesting how mores have changed in so short a time

I read this good book, here in Brazil. This book isn't long or boring, but it is a little outdated, because it was published, more than 20 years ago. As I wrote on the title of this review, this book is outdated and good, because Americans and in fact, almost all the mankind, didn't do anything really new, about venereal diseases. To example, writing about USA in first decade of twenty century, on page 23: "The press remained reticent on the subject of sexual diseases, refusing to print accounts of their effects". On page 176, writing about American press and venereal disease in 1960 decade: "In 1964 NBC cancelled plans to air a two-part drama on two popular television series, "Mr. Novak" and "Dr. Kildare" in which a high school student contracted venereal disease." I think that I'll be the only reviewer of this book, than I must show the table of contents of this book: Introduction: Sex Disease and Medicine > Page 3. I. "Damaged Goods": Progressive Medicine and Social Hygiene > Page 7. II. "Fit to Fight": The commission on Training Camp Activities > Page 52. III. "The Cleanest Army in the World": Venereal Disease and the AEF > Page 96. IV. "Shadow in the Land" > Thomas Parran and the New Deal > Page 122. V. Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet: Venereal Disease in the Age of antibiotics > Page 161. VI. "Plagues and Peoples": The AIDS Epidemic > Page 183. Appendix > Page 205. Note on sources > Page 206. Manuscript Sources > Page 207. Abbreviations > Page 209. Notes > Page 210. Index > Page 259. \*\*\*\*\* Failures of this book really

exists. Some of them: 1-Has nothing about circumcision; it was also used "to prevent" venereal diseases in USA. 2-Being published in 1987, it is very outdated about AIDS. 3-Has nothing about anti-masturbation hysteria and its relation with doctors, clergy, etc.

Interesting read!

An early and interesting book by Allan Brandt, the author of the fine "The Cigarette Century." This

book focuses on American public health policies towards venereal disease, specifically syphilis and gonorrhea. Brandt covers the period from late 19th century to the 1950s. Brandt describes an interesting convergence of expanding scientific knowledge and power, reformism, and efforts at moral regulation. Brandt starts with Progressive era efforts at diminishing the impact of venereal disease. Fueled by the discoveries of late 19th century bacteriology and by fears of the social stresses accompanying industrialization-urbanization which cast venereal disease as a particular threat to middle class life and values, Progressive reformers embarked on a series of efforts that were an uneasy combination of pragmatic public health measures and moral regulation. These contradictions are a recurring theme of subsequent venereal disease control efforts. Brandt shows WWI as a particularly important event in venereal disease control. Both pragmatic and moral concerns made venereal disease control a particularly important issue for the suddenly huge armed forces. The urgency of addressing venereal disease control heightened the internal contradictions of trying to pragmatically control venereal disease while maintaining traditional moral attitudes. These problems were initially encountered in WWI and re-emerged with a vengeance in WWII. In the interwar period, venereal disease control again emerged as a reformist issue with New Deal oriented reformers pursuing more pragmatic efforts based on increased Federal involvement. These efforts, led by the famous Thomas Parran, were surprisingly successful. Brandt has good discussions of the continued tension between pragmatic reformism and moral control and the complex political dynamics of venereal disease control. The book concludes with an inevitably dated chapter on HIV. Written in the mid-80s, and on the threshold of the first successful trials or anti-retroviral therapy, this chapter is a grim reminder of the challenges faced by patients, physicians, and public health officials at that time. Brandt has some good discussions of the political complications of HIV and shows them to be a continuation of many of the controversies occurring with earlier efforts to control syphilis and gonorrhea. Brandt shows that one of the effects of Progressive era efforts was to bring issues of sexuality into public discussions. Often resisted, this inadvertent consequence may well have

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