

Infections

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1 History

450 B.C. Thucydides comments on the possible role of immune response in controlling the Black Death. No second infection after survival. No scientific interest for these interesting observations was put forth at this time. The Athenians and Spartans probably converted money from basic research into their military budget. That does not change in our times. Scientific progress could be made by industry rather than by academics.

In contrast a Tibetan monk from the Omei mountains at the Tibetan border 1000 A.C. inoculated successfully the son of a Minister with attenuated scabrous material from cases with active smallpox. The monk refused any gift, requested the Minister to serve his people faithfully and returned to his mountains as a hermit there as he was before. The inoculation became more and more popular in China. In Turkey, parents pretreated their girls with scabrous material to protect their daughters for beauty. Lady Wortley Montagu (1690-1762) got to know in 1716 in Constantinople this treatment against smallpox, which was practised there already frequently.

On March 18, 1718 she successfully inoculated her own son against strong opposition in England. She could publish her results only in a newspaper, the flying post. The citation index is zero. Later on, after Jenner, vaccination became a perfectly recommended protection against infection.

Lecture with [Nicholas A. Mitchison \(2005\)](#)