

Weekly Writing Assignment #12: Medical Technology and Disease

-- Due in Section, week of 11/29- 12/01 --

As the readings this week show, new diagnostic technologies (thermometers, laboratory tests, sphygmomanometers, etc.) transformed many aspects of medicine. Doctors increasingly relied on measurable signs (temperature, blood pressure, white blood cell count) instead of reported symptoms (feverish, headache) to diagnose disease. These technologies allowed doctors to quantify diagnosis, make comparisons between patients more easily, etc. Physicians still worry that these new technologies, despite their many advantages, did irreparable damage to doctors' clinical skills and the patient-doctor relationship. In addition to these impacts on medicine, medical technology has had a major impact on the nature of disease.

Using this week's readings, especially Evans and Greene, answer the following question: did hypertension (a disease in which a patient's blood pressure is greater than 140/90) exist before sphygmomanometers and hydrochlorothiazide? What impact did each of these technologies have on the existence of the disease?

Keep your answer short (200 words). There are many possible answers to this philosophical question. Feel free to pick and defend one, or to provide several different ones. When you mention specific material from the texts or use quotations, provide adequate citations (author, page number).