

10/18 American Indian Medicine

Understanding Past World Views

John Josselyn and the case of the woman “with a Wolf in her Breast”
Dismiss reports of cures, or take them seriously?

The Role of Medicine

Who has been to a doctor?
Who has taken a prescription medicine? Over-the-counter remedies?
Therapeutic systems and societal responses to disease
Diagnosis: from symptoms to meaning
Treatment: curative or palliative
Sick roles and healer roles
Medical marketplace

“Primitive” Medicine: Paleolithic America

Medicine and religion
Herbal and ritual healing
Trephining
Therapeutic eclecticism
Sophisticated systems of American urban societies

Accounts of Indian Medicine

From colonists to today
Qualification: diversity of Indian healing systems
Qualification: evolved over time, not static
Colonists’ evaluations: impressed and skeptical

Efficacy?

Diagnosis: likely provided meaning to illness experience
Prognosis: likely quite accurate
Relief of symptoms?
Altered course of illness?
Placebo effects
Importance of shared faith in efficacy by healers and patients