



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE POLICIES AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1945-1962.

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Abstract

Pressured by the health challenges which faced the colony, the medical administrative structure was reorganized and systems to deal with specific disease episodes were instituted. Health problems, loomed large in the colony and these were reflected in the social outbursts of the 1930s and the incidence of zoonotic diseases. These, along with the outbreak of World War II were important markers in the process of change in this sector. The overburdened colonial medical system began to apply some of the tenets of tropical medicine as articulated by metropolitan schools of medicine, which resulted in increased emphasis on preventive medicine. This effort caused environmental issues to become more prominent in medicine and health care measures in the colony after 1945.

This study examines the operations of the health sector in the years prior to 1945 to demonstrate its general orientation, the problems it faced and the strategies it utilized to deal with them and the relationship that developed between the practice of medicine and the environment in Trinidad and Tobago over the period 1945 to 1962. It shows how these efforts reflected a change from the exclusion of the past to one of greater inclusion. It argues that the intensified effort for preventive medicine resulted from the environmental health issues that were evident earlier, the recommendations of the Moyne Commission, war preparation and the war itself. For the first time ascribed a role to the physical, social and cultural environment in health and health care. It was this thrust that finally began to embrace the masses into the health care system and ended the longstanding practice of social exclusion in medical care.