

Unit 1 Ancient Medicine

Gods and spirits

What's the idea?

- the idea that gods and spirits caused and cured disease was very popular in the ancient world.
- People were not able to explain disease rationally and so unseen causes, (such as demons, spirits and gods) were blamed for making people ill. The Egyptians blamed foreign gods for plagues and prayed to the gods Bes and Sekhmet to protect them.

Tell me more

- Since the causes of disease were seen as supernatural, so was its treatment. As a result, priests and temples became the first doctors and hospitals.
- Much of their work consisted of appeasing the gods through chants, prayers, sacrifices and spells

What next?

- the idea that gods are responsible for disease has lasted thousands of years from the Ancient Egyptians (from 3000 BC) to the Roman Empire (to AD 400). Today medicine is a recognised science and yet people of many faiths still pray or go to shrines for their healing e.g. the town of Lourdes in France.
- Spiritual healing is now becoming a growing alternative to visiting the doctor. Faith healers have become popular in recent years as more people have become interested in alternative religions.