

# History of nursing/Prehistoric times

Prehistoric man suffered from many traumas, e.g. from infections transmitted from animals while hunting. He was relatively well immune. The average age was 35 years for men, 30 years for women. The height of prehistoric man was low, which was due to insufficient nutrition, a nomadic lifestyle and the effects of the natural environment. At the time of the transition to an agricultural way of life (the so-called *Neolithic revolution* - in our country, *the Younger Stone Age* from about 5500 BC) there was a change in the way of procuring food (artificial feeding of infants is documented from this time). Grinding grains preserved valuable nutrients in cereals, but undesirable additives from stone crushing mills posed a risk to the teeth. The sedentary way of life related to agriculture caused the growing number of the population, the densification of settlements, the establishment of new villages. This brought certain advantages, but also new threats to health. The number of injuries during hunting decreased, on the other hand there were combat clashes and worsened hygienic conditions.

The earliest care of prehistoric man was **instinctive**. The primitive man practiced the same as animals - lie down, do not move, wash the wound. In the primitive communal society, people could not explain various natural phenomena - lightning, thunder, rain, fire, death and the emergence of diseases seemed incomprehensible to them. They attributed everything to supernatural forces.

*Magical thinking* arose, the main content of which was fear of the anger and malice of supernatural powers. These were considered the cause of all natural phenomena and diseases.

## Magical Thinking

The main content of magical thinking was **fear** of the anger and malice of supernatural forces, which were considered the cause of natural phenomena and diseases. People began to worship and wear material **objects** - amulets, which were attributed magical power. People wore amulets and talismans on their wrists, fingers and genitals. Amulets were supposed to protect a person from illness and the influence of supernatural powers. People began to explain illnesses by saying that **an evil demon** had entered the patient, which had to be expelled from the patient's body. The care of the individual consisted in **exorcism**, which was a curative, magical ceremony characteristic of ritual incantation, and this was supposed to drive the demon out of the body, according to the ideas of the time. **Trepanation of the skull** was another way to get rid of the demon.

## The emergence of natural healing

This method of care belongs to the period **of matriarchy**, when a woman, as a biological and social being and guardian of the family, also became a healer. In the further development of human society, magical thinking persists, but natural healing is slowly beginning to appear. The first **means** used in healing were the bark of trees, roots, substances of animal origin - blood, fat, entrails, liver. Care was provided free of charge. Healing later passed to **priests** as professional mediators between the earth and God. Over time, the provision of care for the sick in temples appears. These were dedicated to the gods who decided on the health and illness of people.

## Shamanism

Shamans were individuals who practiced healing as their profession. They had the function of **clan chief**. Shamanism was based on the cult of demons and focused on expelling the demon from the body of the sick. The main healing ceremony was a ceremonial dance, symbolic gestures, incantations, playing the drum. Magicians and shamans were held in high esteem by primitive thinking people.

## Links

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### Doporučená literatura

- HLAVÁČKOVÁ, Ludmila – SVOBODNÝ, Petr. *Dějiny lékařství českých zemích*. 1. edition. Triton, 2004. 247 pp. ISBN 80-7254-424-1.