



Medicine and the German Jews: A History

John M. Efron

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Medicine played an important role in the early secularisation and eventual modernisation of German Jewish culture. As both physicians and patients, Jews exerted a great influence on the formation of modern medical discourse and practice. This fascinating book investigates the relationship between German Jews and medicine from medieval times until its demise under the Nazis. John Efron examines the rise of the German Jewish physician in the Middle Ages and his emergence as a new kind of secular, Jewish intellectual in the early modern period and beyond. The author shows how nineteenth-century medicine regarded Jews as possessing distinct physical and mental pathologies, which in turn led to the emergence in modern Germany of the 'Jewish body' as a cultural and scientific idea. He demonstrates why Jews flocked to the medical profession in Germany and Austria, noting that by 1933, 50 percent of Berlin's and 60 percent of Vienna's physicians were Jewish. He discusses the impact of this on Jewish and German culture, concluding with the fate of Jewish doctors under the Nazis, whose assault on them was designed to eliminate whatever intimacy had been built up between Germans and their Jewish doctors over the centuries.

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