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Abstract

The majority of children living in the United States today enjoy excellent health and access to health care. This was not always so; before the late 19th century, the field of pediatric medicine scarcely existed, and the combination of harsh and unsanitary living conditions in the urban areas where most immigrants settled, infectious diseases, and improper handling of milk was particularly deadly for infants and children. This article discusses the relationship between pediatric medicine and the broader children's health and public health movements in the United States in the early decades of the 20th century. That relationship resulted in 3

developments that had a profound impact on children's health: the establishment of dispensaries and milk stations that served impoverished children, campaigns to educate parents about illness prevention and child rearing, and the medical inspection of public schools and schoolchildren. Today, American children face both new threats to health and the reemergence of infectious diseases that were once thought conquered. Pediatricians and public health professionals must work together in the same spirit of social activism and community responsibility to meet these challenges.

Full Text

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Selected References

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