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MEDICINE AND THE BODY  
IN THE RENAISSANCE

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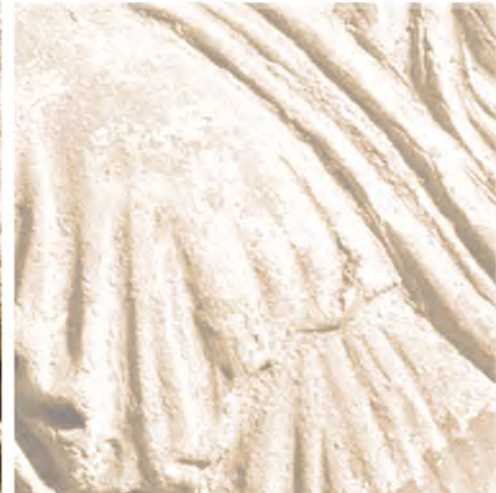
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STUDIO FIRMANO  
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA



PSMEMM  
Palgrave Studies in Medieval & Early Modern Medicine



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EVENTS

# IDENTIFYING PATHOLOGIES THROUGH THERAPY

30  
SEPTEMBER  
2021  
6.00 pm CET

A NEW APPROACH TO ANCIENT DISEASES

ALAIN TOUWAIDE • Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions

Identifying the medical conditions mentioned in the ancient literature, be these medical or otherwise, is a challenging task in medical history. Whereas scholars have claimed that diseases such as the plague are impossible to retrace, because of the mutations of pathogens, the retrospective diagnostic technique formulated by Mirko Grmek (1924-2000) opened the way to a better understanding of medical conditions in classical antiquity. Most recently,

bio-molecular research has been successful in identifying some pathogens from archaeological remains. However productive they might be, these new methods do not allow for either the identification of a broader range of medical conditions or a quantitative, viz. epidemiological reconstruction of the populations' health at any given point in time. This lecture will explore a new approach: positing that manuals of

therapeutics reflect the pathological reality of their time, it will explore the very limits and possibilities of such an approach, with the many questions it raises and the perspective it opens. Particular attention will be devoted to the present-day pharmacological analysis of plants (along with the medical conditions which they are efficacious on) as a key to a *reverse identification* of pathologies that are not necessarily identified with precision *ab initio*.