The Medical Press and its Public

Sally Frampton

In the 1800s, the literary marketplace was home to a vast constellation of medical periodical literature that catered to the tastes of a wide range of audiences. Weeklies aimed at medical practitioners circulated in tandem with journals that were riding the ebbs and flows of fashions in alternative medicine. Myriad penny publications on health and hygiene competed for the attention and purses of the public, while journals on everything from nursing and first aid to mental science, dermatology and physiology amplified the market. Around 1800 there were perhaps ten or fewer medical journals circulating in Britain and Ireland. By the end of the century there were over 100, with periods of rapid growth in the field at the beginning and end of the century (Bynum and Wilson 1992, 30-31). This is not to mention the multitude of generalist titles that relayed medical news and health advice to their readers, often reproduced from the pages of doctors' journals, and which saw medicine firmly embedded within the mass media by the end of the century. The construction and communication of medical knowledge through print culture involved the whole spectrum of society, and the sheer number of journals either wholly or substantially devoted to matters of medicine and health that were available belies any easy answer as to what constituted the medical press in the nineteenth century. Its meaning was not necessarily stable, as audiences and content altered and adapted to changing medical, social, and journalistic currents.

In this chapter, I chronicle the changing face of medical journalism over the course of the century, paying particular attention to three genres: the professional press, journals devoted to

non-orthodox medical practices like homeopathy and mesmerism, and medical and health journals which actively sought to include the public in their audience, the latter of which found increasing popularity in the last three decades of the century. These categories are neither neat nor exhaustive; indeed, by examining them together I evince their continuous entanglement with one another. Collectively, they serve as an introductory point to what was an expansive medical press. They show too that as well as promoting professional cohesiveness, medical journals of the nineteenth century were also significant in facilitating laypeople's engagement with and contributions to medical knowledge and politics.

The Making of the Medical Weekly

Most medical journals circulating at the beginning of the nineteenth century had connections to one of the numerous societies that had sprung up during the eighteenth century to accommodate practitioners joining together to discuss their cases in the congenial company of fellow medical men. Titles such as *Medical Observations and Inquiries* (begun in 1757), and *Medical Communications* (established in 1784), selected for publication reports that had been read at such gatherings. These journals dissected medicine away from generalist scientific periodicals such as the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, which generated only minimal interest amongst medical practitioners due to its focus on natural history, astronomy and other non-medical sciences.

The emergence of such venues for knowledge exchange, and the demarcation of occupational boundaries that it signified, facilitated a change in the content and style of doctors' communications. The focus shifted from outlining intriguing cases of medical curiosities and the

recording of disease outbreaks to more practically grounded observations, based on practitioners' experiences with patients. This reflected a re-organization of medical practice in the eighteenth century centred upon the clinical observation of patients' symptoms. Erudite and philosophical musings were discouraged to make space for communications that offered guidance to practitioners in their everyday encounters with the sick (Kronick 1994: 279).

The establishment in 1805 of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* by the physician Andrew Duncan heralded a further recasting of the medical journal model, with Duncan emphasising the role journals could play in furthering the social and ethical responsibilities of the medical profession. Duncan allotted space within his journal for discussions of public health, medical jurisprudence and the philanthropic duty of doctors (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* January 1805: 4; Coyer 2017). Despite its nod to Edinburgh in the title, where Duncan was based, *The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* was jointly published in London and Edinburgh, both traditionally the hubs of medical activity in Britain. However by the early nineteenth century, the locus of medical publishing had definitively shifted to London's Paternoster Row, as practitioners from across the country gravitated towards the large teaching hospitals and lucrative private practice opportunities that the city held. Among the most innovative publishing endeavours was *The Monthly Gazette of Health*, which ran between 1816 and 1832, and which was edited by the physician Richard Reece. Reece intended for the journal to be accessible to both medical practitioners and the public. In the *Gazette's* opening editorial, he contended that unethical and unqualified 'quack' practitioners were sustaining themselves on the ignorance and naivety of the public. The solution was to create a more informed lay community, and the *Gazette*, he claimed, would 'enlighten the mass of mankind' (*The Monthly*

Gazette of Health January 1816: iii). It would provide rigorous analysis of proprietary medicines - exposing those which were ineffective and dangerous - as well as tips and advice on remedies, cleanliness, diet, and exercise, all of which would furnish the lay reader with enough knowledge to avoid the overtures of quacks. Reece cited as his influence the *Gazette de Santé*, a French medical journal that had run between 1773 and 1789. *The Gazette de Santé* similarly aimed to draw in an audience of both doctors and laypeople, a common characteristic of the plethora of medical journals that emanated from France in the late eighteenth century, and which Reece appeared to be trying to replicate (Brockliss and Jones 1997: 647).

The 1810s and 1820s saw a further widening of the medical periodical market, with editors attempting to cater for neglected audiences within the professional community. In 1816, the same year that Reece began the *Monthly Gazette of Health,* the surgeon James Johnson launched the *Medico-Chirurgical Journal* (later re-titled the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*). Johnson had returned to England two years prior, after a long career overseas as a naval surgeon, during which he had travelled extensively throughout the British colonies. Through the *Review*, Johnson mediated his own experiences as a practitioner sent to far-flung lands, and he pledged to make the journal particularly suited to army and navy practitioners, as well as to those located in the countryside and colonies, away from the metropolitan centres of medical practice. He professed an international outlook, printing and exchanging content with Continental and American journals, and believed that knowledge of foreign environments, which came with their own peculiar diseases and disorders, could be gleaned only from the observations of those who had experienced them (Harrison 1992: 304-305). Johnson saw medical journals as an indispensable resource for doctors at all stages of their career wherever their location, the conduit for dialogue

between the professional community at large. Even the most cultivated doctor, Johnson argued, could not be a force of progress unless they took in periodical literature, which informed him 'what others are doing, and what others are thinking in the world around him' (*Medico-Chirurgical Review* June 1820*:* ii).

Johnson's *Review* grew steadily more popular among doctors, with a circulation of over 1300 in 1821 (*Medico-Chirurgical Review* 1822: i). But just two years later he would be forced to contend with a startling new competitor. Arriving in October 1823, the *Lancet* was immediately distinctive. Its name, weekly frequency and cheap price distinguished it from the Transactions, Quarterlies, Monthlies and Reviews that had traditionally dominated the medical periodical market. Edited by the surgeon and general practitioner Thomas Wakley and named in reference both to the surgical instrument and the type of arched window of the same name, the *Lancet* promised to shed light on the workings of the profession, opening to public scrutiny the corruption and nepotism that Wakley believed was rife in the higher echelons of the medical community. By 1824 the circulation of the *Lancet* was somewhere between four and ten thousand copies a week – a remarkable feat for a medical journal (Brown 2014: 183).

Michael Brown has argued that the immediate and immense popularity of the *Lancet* has led historians to focus on its exceptionalism, serving to decontextualize the journal from the cultural milieu within which it was established (Brown 2014: 184-5). In fact, Wakley was influenced by an array of journalistic contemporaries; the *Lancet's* opening editorial, where Wakley pledged to make the journal accessible not only to all medical and surgical practitioners, but also to 'every individual in these realms', echoed the mission statements of both Reece's *Monthly Gazette of*

Health as well as Johnson's *Medico-Chirurgical Review* (*Lancet* 5 October 1823: 2). Wakley's journalism, which saw him avoid obscure technical language and terminology in favour of an accessible literary style, augmented by the fast pace of a weekly format, was also influenced by his personal association with the radical pamphleteer William Cobbett, whose own weekly publication, the *Political Register,* had attained great success (Brown 2014: 187; Clarke 1874: 19). Wakley's call to the public to help reform medicine, by educating themselves in the dangers of quackery, echoed the participatory rhetoric of Cobbett, who sought to reform Parliament, expand suffrage, and reach out to communities that had been ignored by the political classes.

Nonetheless, the *Lancet* also distinguished itself from its predecessors through a controversial strategy designed to garner attention to Wakley's cause and procure a large audience. In the first issue, Wakley published a lecture given at Guy's Hospital by Sir Astley Cooper, London's most famous surgeon, attended and transcribed by Wakley himself (Clarke 1874: 16). Wakley promised that the entire series of Cooper's lectures would be published over the following months. Lectures were the livelihood of hospital surgeons, who made their fortunes by attracting students to their institutions, charging them substantial fees for the privilege of hearing their pedagogical orations. As a result, Cooper and others like him tended to be selective in what they published, carefully preserving enough non-published material so that they could continue to attract students to their lectures. Wakley's appropriation of such material in his sixpence journal caused a sensation and precipitated numerous legal disputes during the *Lancet's* early years, as Wakley continued to publish lectures and cases drawn from the confines of the hospital, along the way exposing the incompetence of various members of the medical profession. He quickly gained a reputation as a troublemaker, unafraid to expose the shortcomings of the medical elite to

his readers. Perhaps most notorious was Wakley's pursuit of Bransby Cooper, nephew of Astley Cooper, who through his family connections had found employment as a surgeon at Guy's. Wakley used the *Lancet* to expose the younger Cooper's questionable skill in surgery, publishing a harrowing account in 1828 of a botched lithotomy (the removal of bladder stones) undertaken by Bransby, which had resulted in the death of the patient the following day (*Lancet* 29 March 1828: 959-960; Brown 2014: 195-196). Bransby Cooper later successfully sued Wakley, but the incident left its mark on the surgeon, calling into the question his suitability for the role of hospital surgeon and making visible the nepotism that was rife within teaching hospitals (Clarke 1874: 78). Wakley did not restrict himself to the professional aristocracy of London either; one of the most popular features of the *Lancet* during the 1820s and 1830s was a regular 'letter' from 'Erinensis', an anonymous correspondent who wrote a long series of satirical pieces viciously lampooning the incompetence and unsavoury behaviour of doctors in Dublin (Clarke 1874: 151; Cassell 1997: 29).

Other titles that attempted to emulate the *Lancet's* winning combination of anti-elitist politics, cheapness and weekly frequency met with varying degrees of success. The *Forceps,* begun in 1844, was a clear attempt to create a *Lancet* of sorts for dental practitioners, but lasted less than a year; the *London Medical and Surgical Journal*, which, like the *Lancet*, adopted a radical stance, survived only from 1828 to 1836. More successful was the *Medical Times,* begun in 1839 by an ambitious young medical student named Frederick Knight Hunt, who managed to undercut the *Lancet* in price by selling his journal at three pence. Like Wakley, Hunt proclaimed a mission to root out quackery and humbug and gained an audience from across the spectrum of the medical community as well from the public. However, where the *Lancet* ignited controversies and feuds,

the *Medical Times* shied away from them. Astutely positioning the *Medical Times* as a more respectable publication than Wakley's journal - but one which nonetheless shared its egalitarian principles – its editors and publishers transformed the publication into one of the leading medical journals of the mid-decades. In Ireland, the *Dublin Medical Press* began in 1839, and in 1867 merged with a London-based title, the *Medical Circular*, to form the *Medical Press and Circular*, priced at sixpence, and which ran for almost a hundred years. Despite its focus gradually shifting to English and Scottish medicine, the journal's editors retained an active connection with Irish medical culture through its features and news items (Daly 2008: 28). The journal for example, was noticeably more open to the idea of women joining the profession than its competitors, reflecting the more liberal attitude towards female doctors that there was in Ireland compared to Britain. (Kelly 2013: 4-5).

Thus, medical journals acted as hubs for the discussion of professional politics. In the mid-decades of the century doctors were becoming vocal about the need for stricter regulation within the profession. This was partially fulfilled with the passing of the 1858 Medical Act. The Act established the Medical Register, which legally distinguished doctors with recognized qualifications from the vast throngs of practitioners, many with no qualifications at all, who crowded the medical marketplace (although it did not criminalise unqualified practitioners). The *British Medical Journal*, which began life in 1840 as the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, was the product of this changing culture of medicine. Established to represent the interests of provincial practitioners, it was sent out to British Medical Association members as part of their subscription, and consequently boasted the highest readership of any medical journal

in Britain in the second half of the century. In this fashion, the *British Medical Journal* ostensibly integrated the journal format into the everyday world of thousands of doctors.

By the 1850s, medical weeklies were sufficiently authoritative that they could affect campaigns that extended beyond the realm of the clinic into broader issues of public health and social reform. These often saw medical journal editors acting as early innovators in investigative journalism, foreshadowing the trend within the general press in the second half of the century for the 'New Journalism', which was of a reformist bent and often focused on investigating social conditions. Ernest Hart, who edited the *British Medical Journal* between 1867 and 1898, became well-known for campaigning on a vast range of issues around public health and hygiene. In the late 1860s for example, he began reporting on 'baby- farming', the practice of babies and young children, often those who were illegitimate, being left with a guardian in exchange for a fee. Hart exposed a murky world of overcrowded and unsanitary lodgings, and unscrupulous individuals neglecting children in their care. His campaign brought significant attention to the issue, and the Infant Life Protection Act was passed in 1872, which required homes where more than two children were being fostered to be registered. The Act was an example of the growing power medical journals wielded as the profession consolidated its authoritative status in society. Increasingly throughout the century, medical journals would also wade into the politics of colonial administration. In 1894, Hart visited Calcutta to address the Indian Medical Congress, giving a damning critique of the organization of the Anglo-Indian medical profession, which was predominantly comprised of doctors in service to the government or military. Most were overburdened by the sheer amount of practical and administrative duties they were expected to perform. Hart sharply criticised the government for failing to invest time and resources into

medical research in India, and which, he claimed, meant Britain trailed behind other European powers in reaping the fruits of scientific discovery that the colonies offered (Arnold 2000: 141). Hart's remarks were widely reported, not just in the medical press but in the daily newspapers as well and fostered a growing consensus that the investigation of tropical pathologies needed to be taken seriously by those in charge of governing the British Empire (*The Times* 31 December 1894: 5).

Those who worked in medical journalism revelled in their influence. 'No delusion can long pass undetected, no imposture unexposed, and, I will add, no wrong unredressed', wrote the obstetrician and former *Lancet* journalist William Tyler Smith in 1853 on the growing power of the medical press: 'it is thus that the medical press must become more powerful than Halls or Colleges in uniting the whole profession as one body' (Smith 1853: 586). In medicine, where the profession was rife with fractures and divisions between the ranks, where regional differences were felt intensely, and where competition for patients could be divisive, the medical press, or at least the *idea* of a medical press – in truth, medical journals often vehemently disagreed with one another – reinforced the notion of a profession united in its values. As I will explore in the next section, it also served to further separate mainstream doctors from non-orthodox practitioners, the latter of whom were roundly dismissed by the professional weeklies, and in whose disparagement doctors could find common ground.

Medical Journals in the Mid-Century: Professional Orthodoxy and Resistance

Wakley's early attempt at exciting popular appeal served both as an inspiration and as a counterpoint to other medical journal editors, some of whom avoided the risky public-facing

strategies of their rival and asserted the centrality of professional dialogue to their publications. The *Lancet* too, after receiving criticism from its journalistic contemporaries in its early days – Johnson's *Medico-Chirurgical Review* accused it of aiming for 'the popularity of a pot-house or a smoaking club' (*Medico-Chirurgical Review* March 1824: 978), eventually began to adopt a more austere tone towards the middle of the century and became cautious about reaching out to the public. Regardless, the *Lancet* continued to have a relatively wide appeal, and its correspondence columns suggest it retained a degree of popularity amongst non-professional readers throughout the century, as correspondents who claimed to be 'laymen' wrote to the journal on a range of issues, often relating to public health issues such as vaccination and teetotalism, and sometimes had their letters published in its back pages.

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IMAGE CAPTION: Cartoon from an 1883 issue of *Punch.* A man is admonished by his friend for reading the 'depressing' *Lancet*. *Punch's* satire attests to the continued appeal the *Lancet* retained throughout the century among a public perennially curious about matters of medicine and health.

Credit: Wellcome Collection.

Unlike audiences for other, more specialized scientific journals, the public were, of course, a central component to the content of medical journals, with doctors' case reports comprising a significant portion of the material included. By the second half of the nineteenth century, publishing cases had become essential to practitioners wishing to lay claim to new treatments and procedures. Indeed, *not* publishing cases was increasingly seen as tantamount to deliberate

concealment, particularly when it concerned risky or failed innovations, where the patient's condition had not improved or had even resulted in their death (Frampton 2016: 574). Patients' cases, their histories and experiences of pain and illness, were crucial to doctors' medical journal narratives, constructed in a way that would present their treatment plans in a positive light, and which were shaped by the prevailing trends of contemporary science and medical practice. Though increasingly technical in nature, accounts of illness and its treatment retained an element of interest to a public perennially fascinated with matters of health, and public reading rooms were stocked with the latest issues of the most popular medical weeklies (Cobbe 1888: 29). There was a financial advantage to maintaining the attention of laypeople: doctors comprised a relatively small subscription base upon to rest a journal's fortunes, given that few of them had the time, inclination, or money to peruse more than one or two journals at a time. Sustaining a degree of appeal beyond the profession could mean the difference between commercial success and failure, but it had to be accommodated subtly and within the context of the professional weeklies' increasingly formal tone.

The changing content and style of medical journals in the mid-decades was also informed and shaped by the profession's efforts to expunge the nefarious effects of quackery in its midst. The 1840s saw an upsurge of interest in new and non-orthodox medical theories and practices in Britain and beyond. Homeopathy, hydropathy, mesmerism and phrenology found favour among the public, including highly influential members of the upper classes. As such, their popularity could not be ignored. Positioning themselves as mouthpieces of the medical community, the *Lancet*, *Medical Times* and others put themselves at the forefront of the fight against their infiltration into British life. Homeopathy especially troubled the profession, given that several

high-profile doctors had converted to Samuel Hahnemann's system, which based treatment on a 'law of similars' – medicines that produced symptoms mimicking a certain disease were thought by homeopaths to cure that disease. In 1844 the profession's most prominent homeopathic convert, John Epps, had sent four of his cases to the *Lancet*, which were promptly returned to him unpublished. In accompanying correspondence, Wakley indicated to Epps that he would have printed the cases, despite his opposing views, but that readers and subscribers of the *Lancet* were so opposed to homeopathy that their inclusion was impossible (Epps 1845: iv). Wakley depicted his audience as the driving force behind the journal, of whose opinion the *Lancet* was simply the channel. In fact, Wakley continued to exercise considerable control over the direction of the journal he had begun and of which he remained the editor until his death in 1862.

Despite Wakley's claim that medical journals were merely a mirror of current medical opinion, the *Lancet* and other titles took an active role in excluding homeopaths and others from professional dialogue, and non-orthodox practitioners were generally compelled to create their own literature in the absence of being granted any space in the professional weeklies. John Drysdale, editor of the *British Journal of Homoeopathy*, founded in 1843, and which stayed in print for over forty years, saw the need for his journal as regrettable but that 'the necessity for a sectarian title results from the utter neglect of the subject by the Medical Journalists of the country' (*The British Journal of Homoeopathy* January 1843: vi).

Journals designed to promote new and non-orthodox systems of medicine diverged in their approach. The *British Journal of Homeopathy*, as well as the *Homoeopathic Times*, which ran between 1849 and 1854, were both dry and dense. They focused on converting the profession to

their cause and attempted to draw in doctors with complex clinical cases, as well as the latest news on medical politics, clearly emulating the format of the professional medical weeklies. Others sought to harness the broad, popular appeal of what were seen by many members of the public as exciting and novel medical treatments. The *Homoeopathic World*, begun in 1866, had been named in reference to both to the holistic nature of the homeopathic lifestyle, as well as to express the journal's intention to bring together doctors and laypeople as readers and contributors. Its aim was to provide articles that would be readable to those with only a minimal education, and which could be shared amongst family members. The journal invited its lay readers to be active participants in the construction of the homeopathic community: 'In our endeavours to make good our entry in the households of the land we must mainly depend upon our correspondents in various parts of the country from whom we earnestly solicit information of a practical and general character,' the journal stated in its opening issue (*The Homoeopathic World* January 1866: 1). The public were thus entrusted with contributing their knowledge and experiences to the journal, to an extent that would have been prohibited by the mainstream medical weeklies. This strategy allowed homeopathists to market themselves as more closely aligned to the wants and needs of the populace than orthodox doctors.

As Jennifer Ruth has argued in her work on the mesmerist journal, the *Zoist,* which ran between 1843 and 1856, many of the non-orthodox journals attempted to straddle the boundary between the professional and the lay press (Ruth 1999: 304-305). Their existence problematises concepts of the medical press and how journals defined themselves in relation to it. While the *Homeopathic Times,* for example, described itself as a medical journal, the *Homeopathic World* rejected such self-identification, largely because of its emphasis on lay contributions. This speaks to the broader issue of the extent to which we can ascertain the individual identity of medical

journals at all. Like other types of periodicals, medical journals were unstable objects: their aims, content and style frequently changed, while the competing voices of contributors, correspondents, and staff, may not have silenced the editorial voice but they did complicate it.

The boundaries of the medical press were further blurred by developments in both print culture and medicine in the second half of the century. An increase in literacy rates, as well as cheaper, more efficient printing, fostered a transformative effect on publishing, rapidly expanding the market for cheap periodical literature aimed at the middle and lower classes. The parameters for involvement in healthcare were also shifting. Within this context, entrepreneurial editors and publishers found scope for new types of medical publications aimed at more diverse audiences.

New Genres and New Audiences: Medical Journals in the Late-nineteenth Century

Following a period of relative stasis in the growth of the medical journal market, the last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a rapid expansion in the titles available, in regard to both their numbers and the diversity of their content, as publishers and editors responded to a trend toward specialist medicine as well as an increasing demand for popular health literature. Medical practitioners were forming burgeoning communities of practice in ophthalmology, laryngology, dermatology and gynaecology, and the profession at large was becoming swayed by the idea that specialization among doctors was the most efficient and progressive mode of medicine, allowing for better teaching and exploratory research (Weisz 2003: 546). Specialist journals were presented as a solution to the overcrowded pages of 'generalist' medical weeklies, which, it was argued, could not accommodate the ever-growing base of new, complex medical knowledge. The *British Gynaecological Journal*, begun in 1885, and the *British Journal of*

Dermatology and Syphilis, established in 1888, were two such examples of this new direction in medical journalism. A blend of 'experience, craft and new science' characterized much of the clinical work of doctors in the second half of the nineteenth century, with theories and techniques from physiology, pathology, chemistry, and bacteriology incorporated into practice (Worboys 2011: 113). This opened further journalistic avenues for new publications focused on the experimental medical sciences, including *The Journal of Physiology* (1878), and *The Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology* (1892). The vast endeavours of the medical profession in the field of public health at this time also produced additional titles devoted to sanitation, food science and regulation, including *Public Health* (1888) and the *British Food Journal* (1899). These diverging sectors and fields of medicine offered new market opportunities for publishers. Yet taking on specialist journals was not without its risks. Unable to compete directly for circulation with the likes of the *British Medical Journal* or the *Lancet*, publishers sometimes struggled to sell advertising space in such journals. Nonetheless, some were remarkably successful, often those oriented towards the medical sciences and public health, paving the way for the firm establishment of specialised practice as a journalistic field by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The growth of the specialist journal in many ways marked the beginning of a publication model for medical practitioners that prevails today, that of journals written in highly technical, scientific language and read by a limited and predominantly professional audience. But while such specialisation was taking hold in the 1880s and 1890s, opposing trends in medical practice also saw journals emerging which focused on making medical knowledge accessible and interesting to lay audiences. The success of the public health movement relied not just on doctors but also

on the participation of the public. Women, especially, were heavily involved in organisations such as the National Health Society, which promoted preventive health measures like cleanliness, good diet, domestic sanitation and hygiene among the less well off. A series of new periodical publications, aimed at both middle-class and working-class audiences, combined public health news and tips on domestic hygiene with space for readers to consult the editor for medical advice. The latter feature was one replicated from cheap generalist publications, including the hugely popular *Reynolds's Miscellany*, which had a long-standing medical advice column that readers could write to, and which saw the journal acting as 'a source of medical authority that inserted itself between readers and more formal sources of medical knowledge' (Furlong 2016: 35). The advice column model was used to maximum effect by *Health: A Weekly Journal of Sanitary Science,* launched in 1883 and edited by the Scottish physiologist and ardent science populariser Andrew Wilson. *Health* was priced at just two pence and promised tips and news on health preservation and disease prevention 'written in plain and non-technical language, and in a thoroughly popular style' that would be suitable to all classes (*Health* April 1883: 1). A large portion of each issue was devoted to Wilson's responses to anxious readers, who solicited his advice on everything from acne and insomnia to piles and dyspepsia. The pseudonyms that correspondents used ('Anxiety', 'Wearied Out', 'Perplexed'), suggested an audience looking to the correspondence columns of *Health* for help with persistent or embarrassing ailments. The anonymity of print allowed individuals to mitigate or delay fully-fledged patienthood, circumventing a face-to-face encounter with a doctor, and the financial and emotional burdens that came with it.

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IMAGE CAPTION: The ‘Queries and Answers’ section from the first volume of *Health* (1883). The popular journal, which sought to link the public to the latest medical news and knowledge, provided ample space for readers to write in for advice about their health.
Credit: Wellcome Collection.

Doctors worried about the impact of lay-oriented medical and health journals upon the public. In 1887 the *Lancet* published a series of editorials criticizing an apparent upsurge in ‘popular’ medical journalism. They complained about the movement of content drawn from the medical weeklies into the generalist press, fearing it would encourage individuals to try and self-diagnose and self-treat, damaging their health in the process. Two journals which attempted to appeal to lay audiences, *The Hospital* and *Baby*, established in 1886 and 1887 respectively, brought to a head the *Lancet’s* concerns about the public’s interaction with medical content. *The Hospital* was a journal recounting hospital work, as well as providing health and hygiene news, while *Baby*, edited by the public health campaigner Ada Ballin, was focused on child health, specifically targeting female readers: something which likely amplified the *Lancet’s* anxieties about the diffusion of medical knowledge to new and potentially unfitting audiences. ‘Have not those who have been brought into contact with the public by service at hospitals, and as lecturers on science applied to public needs, yet learned that "a little knowledge is dangerous” in everything, and in nothing else so much as in the science and art of healing?’ complained the *Lancet* about the two titles (*Lancet* 19 November 1887: 1028).

The thorny question of commercialism was also raised by the existence of journals such as *Health*, *The Hospital* and *Baby*. Doctors who wrote for them – of which there were many - were

liable to be accused of advertising their name, and some were compelled to write anonymously or pseudonymously. Similar publicly-oriented journals had existed throughout the century, but the increasing surveillance within the profession of ethical transgressions by doctors, as well as the increased demand from the public for health literature, compelled the medical community to more explicitly position themselves in relation to 'popular' health journals. Ostensibly the concerns raised were moralistic, but financial considerations also played their part: the professionalized medical establishment feared the effect such publications would have on their own purses if the public chose printed health advice over consultations with doctors.

In the latter decades of the century, medical journalism was also being transformed by other major changes in the landscape of healthcare. The period was marked by a hive of activity centred upon the improvement of nursing training and management. Nurses and doctors were divided on the best means of supporting such changes. Many favoured the registration of nurses as a way of advancing their status. However, influential figures, such as Florence Nightingale, opposed this initiative, believing it would make nursing akin to doctoring, focusing nurses' attention on the acquirement of medical knowledge rather than on their primary role as providers of compassionate care. The split was steeped in the politics of gender, for at its heart was the question of whether women should be accorded the privilege, status and access to knowledge that came with professionalisation.

Such splits and divisions were reflected in the nursing journals that emerged at this time. Britain's first journal devoted to nursing, *Nursing Notes*, founded in 1887 and primarily aimed at midwives, as well as *Nursing Record*, which began in 1888, were both of the pro-registration

camp. The *Nursing Record despite* being a rather dry read, gained influential followers, and soon became key in the push for professionalisation. (King 2009: 463). *The Nursing Mirror*, on the other hand, founded in 1888, firmly opposed registration from the start. Its backer was the businessman, philanthropist, and hospital reformer Henry Burdett, who had also founded *The Hospital*, of which *The Nursing Mirror* was a supplement. Burdett was greatly interested in the improvement of nursing but against a formal register of nurses, and he used both *The Hospital* and *The Nursing Mirror* to express his views on the matter. Chatty and informal, offering job advertisements, correspondence columns, excerpts of medical lectures and passages of prose for comforting the sick, *The Nursing Mirror* was a popular read among nurses. All three journals achieved considerable success, a sign of the demand for nursing literature during this period.

Like other occupational groups, nurses were using periodicals as tools for improving their status. But the establishment and history of the first nursing journals cautions against defining the relationship between print and professionalisation in simplistic terms. *The Nursing Mirror*, for example, while clearly intended to foster a sense of group identity among nurses, was also challenging the most visible signifier of professionalisation, by opposing registration. What is more, the lengthy passage to registration – it would not be enacted in the United Kingdom until 1919 – speaks further to the uneven relationship between the two, with *Nursing Notes* and *Nursing Mirror* struggling to counteract the strong opposition toward it in Britain. Successful journals did not guarantee the achievement of professional aims, even though they might help create them, nor, as we have seen, did the growing professionalisation of a community, such as with doctors, assure the success of a journal in the field.

The nursing journals were one sub-set of a broader category of journals that were created to cater to occupations allied to medicine. They joined several pharmaceutical journals that were already well established, including the hugely successful trade magazine *Chemist* and *Druggist*, begun in 1859 and which continues to be published today. Non-clinical staff at hospitals and institutions also formed a new audience: Henry Burdett's *The Hospital*, described above, addressed a mixed readership that included doctors, medical students, nurses, and the general public, the latter of whom Burdett hoped to interest in hospital news as a means of increasing donations to charitable hospitals. However, Burdett was especially concerned about using the journal to build a sense of community between hospital administrators: laymen and women who played an increasingly significant role in the management of institutions. *The Hospital* carried news and advice on management practices, fundraising, building and construction, and other topics that were likely attract the attention of administrative staff.

The incorporation of the first aid movement into civil life garnered further audiences for new publications at the boundaries of medicine: *First Aid*, for example, begun in 1894, was written 'by ambulance men for ambulance men', although it acknowledged, and welcomed too, the strong interest in first aid work among women (*First Aid* July 1894: 1). The journal carried news of heroic actions amongst St. John's Ambulance members, as well as instructive information on caring for the sick and injured, and more general advice on health and illness. It also functioned as a campaigning periodical, calling for the systematic organization of ambulance transport to service the London hospitals.

IMAGE 3 HERE:

IMAGE CAPTION: Front cover of *First Aid* from 1895. A popular read among St. John Ambulance members and others with an interest in first aid, the journal recounted tales of lifesaving heroism from across the country, shared tips on health and hygiene, and pushed for better ambulance provision in London.
Credit: Museum of the Order of St John, London.

Like journals devoted to non-orthodox medicine, these new genres of publications and their audiences further blurred the boundaries between professional and popular medical publications. In his editorial to the first issue of *Health*, Andrew Wilson pitched his publication as a much-needed link between doctors and the public. Positioning the journal in this way, Wilson asserted the essentially non-professional character of *Health*, while also justifying his inclusion of material from titles like the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* which he quoted *verbatim* to his audience. But other titles took a different tact. Henry Burdett identified *The Hospital* not as a link to the professional medical press, but as part of it, much to the chagrin of both the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, both of which criticized the popular style of *The Hospital* and the attempt by Burdett to blend within it professional and public discourse. In 1896, the *British Medical Journal* did not include *The Hospital* in its round up of the circulation statistics of medical journals, refusing to countenance the idea that it belonged to the genre (*British Medical Journal* 4 January 1896: 36). This was despite a gradual move on Burdett's part towards prioritising his medical audience over lay readers.

Burdett responded to the criticism levelled at *The Hospital* by making a claim for its rightful place within the medical press. 'It does not appeal for the support of the general public any more

than “The Lancet” itself’, wrote Burdett in correspondence to the then editor of the *Lancet* Thomas Henry Wakley, son of the journal’s originator. He went on to say, ‘this is proved by the circumstance that the articles in “The Hospital” are quoted side by side with those from “The Lancet” in leading medical papers like the “New York Medical Record”, and “The Hospital” only goes to the public exactly as “The Lancet” does, by being taken by clubs and being on sale at Messrs. W.H. Smith & Sons Bookstalls’ (Burdett, 1895). Thus, Burdett claimed an inescapable connection to commercialism that bound together medical journals of all kinds, and which made any division between *The Hospital* and the *Lancet* arbitrary, particularly so given the diffusion of medical knowledge across print media spaces was already occurring with frequency.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the media was both a source of authority and of unease for medical practitioners. In utilising the massive expansion in publishing that was happening, doctors were able to create journals that acted as leaders and arbiters of opinion, strengthening the still fragile professional status of medicine. In this way, they shared tactics with other occupational communities in using periodical literature to consolidate a shared identity. Medical journalism was ‘government of the profession by the profession for the profession’, claimed Ernest Hart in 1893 (*British Medical Journal* 1 July 1893: 19). But medical journals also laid bare the vulnerabilities of the medical community. They publicly exposed its inner workings, transforming its debates and discussions into news for public consumption, and drawing attention to the disputes and scandals that medicine was rarely free of. The ingrained commercialism of periodical publication was also problematic. While doctors premised their

increased cultural authority upon an ideal of their professional community as motivated by selfless concern for the sick, medical knowledge required circulation within an increasingly commercialised press space. The taint of trade which came with publishing journals for a profit meant that doctors often viewed the journalistic world with anxiety, carefully working to avoid accusations of advertising and self-promotion.

The nineteenth-century medical press is often conceived of as insular, cultivated only by those within the medical profession, becoming ever more obfuscatory in its language and specialised in its audience as the century progressed. The exclusivity of the medical press to doctors was an image the profession itself strove to present, and one which continues to resonate to this day. In the British and Irish context, the historiography of medical journals has not moved much beyond the two titles that remain most well-known today: the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal.* Certainly, these journals held huge significance in the period under question. But we cannot comprehend the nineteenth-century medical press without widening our focus. The medical press at this time is best understood through its contextualization in the broader public sphere, for even the most esoteric of medical journals was embedded within a wider network of culture, politics and literature which informed its content. Either through the medical journals themselves, or via the intermediary of other periodical publications, non-professional audiences were, alongside doctors and other allied professionals, also consumers and contributors of medical journal content. The medical press was a fluid concept, its moral codes and meanings often changing, and its diverse forms, genres and audiences are worthy of further exploration. By doing so, light is thrown on the ways in which periodical literature has been used to formulate and define medical knowledge, and the role it has had in both prohibiting and promoting access to it.