

Lecture Outline: Biomedicine & Technology

Introduction:

- The technological imperative
- Foucault

1. History of Health Technologies:

- Stethoscope
- X-ray

2. Key Aspects – Health Technologies:

- The body
- The health professional
- The hospital
- The state
- Capital
- The patient

3. Medical Technology & the Conquest of Death

Medical Innovation

- modern biomedicine & technology
- ‘great weapons’
- medical technology & the physician

The Technological Imperative

- 1. technology become available**
- 2. use becomes standardised & routine**
- 3. technology seen as in dispensable**

Foucault & Technology

“The Gaze”

- reductionist
- analytical
- progressively intense
- patient perspective lost

The Stethoscope

- Rene Laennec,
French doctor
- 1850s widely used in
Europe/North
America
- standard 'sign' of
doctor
- gap between lay &
expert

The X-ray

- **Willhelm Rentgen,
German physicist,
1895**
- **seeing within the
living body**
- **diagnosis by touch**
- **professional
development**
- **popular interest**

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1. The History of Health Technologies:

- The Stethoscope
- The x-ray & visual technology

2. Key Aspects – Health Technologies:

- Technology & the diseased body
- Technologies & health professionals
- Technology & hospital
- Technology & state
- Technology & capital
- Technology & patient

3. Medical Technology & the Conquest of Death

1. Technology & the Diseased Body

- subjective closeness vs objective distance
- older diagnostic methods
- doctor's perception of illness
- body as machine

The Body as Machine

“The machine metaphor further encouraged an instrumentalist approach to the body; the physician could ‘repair’ one part in isolation from the rest.”

2. Technology & Health Professions

- professional 'spin-offs'
- doctors as users & innovators
- power dynamics

3. Technology & Hospital

- central role
- information systems & organization
- financial investment

4. Technology & State

- **politics of funding**
- **politics of access**
- **technology versus cost control**

5. Technology & Capital

- **big business**
- **manufacturers, professionals, institutions & funders**
- **Marketing medical technologies**

6. Technology & Patient

- patient advocacy & 'choice'
- Lay understandings
- individual control

The Conquest of Death

- Medicalizing death & dying
- conquest of death
- Other medical goals?

The Conquest of Death

- **medical technology changed social attitudes toward death - new route to 'salvation' in secular society**
- **ethicist Daniel Callahan argues existence of medical technologies capable of prolonging life means use seen as 'necessary'**