The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction
William Bynum

Print Publication Year: 2008 Published Online: Sep 2013
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The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction assesses the origins and development of medicine from ancient times, through the scholastic medieval tradition and the Enlightenment, to the present day. A thematic approach is adopted, with key turning points in medical history being examined, such as the advent of hospitals and rise of experimental medicine. Although this VSI focuses primarily on Western medicine, it also explores encounters with alternative traditions such as Chinese and Indian medicine, and modern complementary medicine, while at the same time engaging with contemporary issues, discoveries, and controversies.

Madness: A Very Short Introduction
Andrew Scull

Print Publication Year: 2011 Published Online: Sep 2013
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Madness: A Very Short Introduction examines the social, cultural, medical, and artistic responses to mental disturbance across more than two millennia. Madness is something that frightens and fascinates us all. It is a word with which we are universally familiar, and a condition that haunts the human imagination. Through the centuries, it has been a theme of poetry and prose, drama and the visual arts. A whole industry has grown up, devoted to its management and suppression. Madness profoundly disturbs our common-sense assumptions; threatens the social order, both symbolically and practically; creates almost unbearable disruptions in the texture of daily living; and turns our experience and our expectations upside down.

Plague: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Slack

Print Publication Year: 2012 Published Online: Sep 2013
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Plague: A Very Short Introduction explores the historical impact of plague over the centuries, focusing on how people coped with the disease and how governments fought it. It examines the impact of plague on settlements, local histories, and art and literature. Plague was responsible for the Black Death of 1348 and the Great Plague of London in 1665, as well as for devastating epidemics much earlier and much later. The impact of plague on modern notions of public health is examined and its presence in powerful images in art and literature is discussed.