

# Preface

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**T**his volume contains four articles illustrating the great diversity of the interdisciplinary study of public health history, covering different periods and regions of the world as well as different aspects of public health and welfare.

Aparna Nair describes the big differences in quarantine policies as pursued by the English East India Company at Madras respectively Bombay in 1802 when confronted by the threat of plague arriving on the troop ships returning from Egypt, where the soldiers had been exposed to a severe plague epidemic. These incongruent responses with regard to quarantine policy reflect intellectual controversies between supporters of contagionist or miasmatic theories of disease, as well as the commercial antagonism towards the use of quarantine in contemporary Britain and other parts of the world.

Pilar Leon Sanz provides an interesting local example of the development of social and medical support institutions for workers in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain. She presents and discusses the voluntary association of catholic workers mutual benefit society, La Conciliacion, founded in Pamplona 1902, offering economic assistance for unemployed or ill worker-members as well as medical and pharmaceutical assistance. La Conciliacion was a mixed association made up by workers, employers and protectors. The association played an active role in the political life of the city, particularly regarding public health and social issues. While La Conciliacion collaborated with other similar mixed Catholic associations the attitude towards the workers' trade unions was strongly negative.

In a review article, as part of a broader programme of research (the Channel Islands Occupation Birth Cohort Study and related studies), Rosemary F. Head and George T. H. Ellison discuss the impact of the 1940-45 German occupation on the health and welfare of the population of the British Channel Islands. The occupation led to a clear deterioration in living conditions with regard to supplies of foodstuffs, medicine as well as problems with hygiene and water. The authors present evidence suggesting that the occupation had significant effects on health,

such as a decline in growth amongst children and higher death rates in certain sections of the population, particularly during the siege 1944-45.

Filipa Henriques, Teresa Rodrigues and Maria O. Martins presents the main characteristics of the Portuguese demographic dynamics and analyse the relation between future changes in the demographic structure by age, sex and educational level and the health of the Portuguese population. Their conclusion is that while the ageing population will have a negative impact on the average health status this could be counterbalanced by the positive effects from a rise in the educational level.

Finally I will invite the readers to submit their articles dealing with the history of public health to make it possible to publish *Hygiea Internationalis* on a more regularly basis.