

Preface

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This volume contains three articles discussing different aspects of public health in late 19th and early 20th century.

Stephan Curtis examines the logistical obstacles as well as the cultural and psychological resistance that midwives had to overcome before women would entrust them to deliver their infants in late 19th century rural Sweden. The study is based on the daybooks of two midwives in the parishes of Indal and Tuna in the Sundsvall region from 1882 to 1890. Diffusion theory is used to illuminate the process by which an increased willingness to have midwives attend births diffused through the region during the study period.

Virgine De Luca Barusse demonstrates how sex education for young people proposed and introduced in France during the first half of the 20th century was based on considerations about morality, demography and public health, particularly regarding decline in family fertility and the rise of venereal diseases. Sex education was conceived as an instrument for the reproduction and “preservation of the race”. The article also discusses how opposition based on underlying political and religious concerns affected the processes of sex education, and demonstrates how the education differed according to whether it addressed girls or boys.

The search for international measures to prevent and control epidemics of cholera, the plague, yellow fever, malaria and typhus which ravaged the world throughout the 19th century, led to a series of International Sanitary Conferences and Conventions under the leadership of European states. Nermin Ersoy, Yuksel Gungory and Aslihan Akpınar review the reasons, process and the results of the international sanitary conferences 1851–1938 from the Ottoman social and health perspective.