

Charles Town Doctors



106 Broad St. Charleston, SC
Dr. Lining's home and apothecary shop where he recorded the weather.
South Carolina Historical Society

Early physicians practiced more than just medicine. Many came to the new world on business ventures or for political gain. As the Carolina Colony grew, doctors faced frequent and deadly epidemics, many occurring simultaneously in a year, and they desperately sought answers to the high mortality rate of disease.

By the early to mid 1700s, doctors and scientists began collaborating and sharing

ideas. Dr. John Lining believed that weather played a role in health and kept track of climate and weather patterns. Dr. Lionel Chalmers thought that the layout of the city affected epidemics, stressing that tight alleyways promoted ill health and the water drains under the city helped prevent yellow fever.

Dr. David Ramsay, a politician at heart, looked to his scientist peers for advice and experimented with new ideas to save his city. Regardless of their scientific point of view, these physicians faced an onslaught of viral outbreaks.



Dr. Chalmers found city planning critical to public health.
Courtesy of Findagrave.com



Today, Chalmers Street commemorates his work.
South Carolina Historical Society



Virus Outbreaks

Smallpox

Smallpox is not a new virus. For centuries, people from around the world experimented with cures trying anything to stop this deadly disease from spreading.

Characterized by high fever and boils, survival often proved worse for those left with deep pitted scars, disfigured for life.

Europe regularly battled smallpox and spread it through exploration to North America decimating the Native American population. The world would not see relief from smallpox until the World Health Organization deemed it eradicated in 1980.

Doctor's Note:

In 1832, the U.S. created a free smallpox vaccination program for Native Americans. By that year, smallpox had killed 90-95% of Native Americans.

Major S.C. Smallpox Outbreaks

1697		1760
1698	1732	1763
1711	1738	1781
1718	1740	1816

Doctor's Note:

Exposure to Malaria weakened a person's immune system, making them susceptible to other diseases like Influenza, Dysentery, Measles, Mumps, Flux, Pleurisy, Whooping Cough, Diphtheria, Typhus, and Scarlet Fever.

Major S.C. Malaria Outbreaks

1684	1709	1711
------	------	------

Malaria

Like yellow fever, malaria requires mosquitoes to pass the virus from person-to-person. Once infected, symptoms can take 10-15 days to emerge, and if not treated in the first 24 hours, it can be fatal. Some people acquire partial immunity to the disease and they serve as asymptomatic carriers to their communities.

Without a vaccine, cities must keep areas dry and free from standing freshwater.

In 2018, the world had 228 million cases with 405,000 deaths, and 67% were children under age five. Scientists have yet to discover a vaccine, but with preventative methods, the World Health Organization adds countries with zero malaria cases to an ongoing list each year.

Major S.C. Yellow Fever Outbreaks

1699	1746	1794
1700	1748	1795
1706	1749	1796
1711	1750	1797
1718	1753	1799
1728	1755	1800
1732	1758	1809
1733	1759	1817
1739	1761	1819
1745	1792	1824

Yellow Fever

Yellow Fever requires a vector to carry the virus. Mosquitoes transmitted the virus between people in tropical climates.

Called "yellow" because of the jaundice coloring that appears in most victims, the virus also causes people to suffer from fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and muscle pain.

Epidemics occur when infected people travel to or live in areas with a dense mosquito population. Without a vaccine, the best way to prevent an outbreak is to remove standing water.

The World Health Organization created a global initiative to eradicate Yellow Fever in 2017.

Doctor's Note:

In June 1900, Major Walter Reed led a medical task force to combat yellow fever. Reed and his team proved that mosquitoes transmitted the virus and disproved the person-to-person contact theory believed for 200 years.



Would you survive?