

Quarantine

What is old is new

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PUBLISHED 2007/208 pp/\$19.95

OVERALL RATING Very good

STRENGTHS Well researched and referenced

WEAKNESSES Arranged chronologically; too detailed in parts

AUDIENCE Medical professionals with an interest in humanities; historians, amateur or professional

In an age that has brought the world severe acute respiratory syndrome and the threat of pandemic influenza, Dr Ian Cameron's historical account of quarantine on Lawlor's Island sheds important light on how communicable disease was managed in Canada during the great period of immigrant expansion. The story is concurrently the history of communicable disease and maritime travel, of health care in Nova Scotia, and of the growth of the Dominion of Canada through immigration.

The American philosopher George Santayana once cynically noted, "History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there." Ensuring the accuracy of the information contained within, Dr Cameron has made a meticulous study of available historical references and relied primarily on first-hand accounts.

Dr Cameron has written a definitive and complete account of the



only substantial quarantine station on Canada's Atlantic coast at the turn of the 20th century. In introducing his book, he reflects on his emotional connection to and curiosity about remnants of old structures that once served the island. In cataloguing the chronology, there are at times tales of mismanagement and ineptitude. More commonly, the reader is given an account of disaster averted. Some anecdotes are heart-wrenching, involving loss, suffering, and despair, and not uncommonly the victims are young children. Intertwined with those are stories of hope and perseverance in the face of adversity. The account of the arrival and quarantine of the Doukhobors is a particularly poignant tale of human migration.

We live in a time when fear of contagion is relatively subdued. To learn the lessons of the effective containment of communicable disease in maritime Canada a full century ago serves to help us gain an appreciation of our public health system today. More important, it beckons us to properly prepare for the next pandemic.

—David Martell MD CCFP

Dr Martell practises family medicine in Lunenburg, NS.

The psychiatry of stroke

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PUBLISHED 2008/430 pp/\$60.00 US

OVERALL RATING Good

STRENGTHS Comprehensive and well organized; easy access to various topics of interest

WEAKNESSES Tries to reach too many audiences, creating an uneven approach

AUDIENCE Health care professionals and lay public

The second edition of Peter Birkett's *The Psychiatry of Stroke* is a comprehensive, well-organized approach to the topic. The author, a psychiatrist, has vast experience in working with stroke survivors. The book is organized into 3 main sections. The first section seems to be aimed at a lay audience, as it uses basic definitions to explain the background, the causative

