Factors that influenced medicine in the 20th century and beyond

Lifestyle

Since c.1900 there has been a greater understanding of how lifestyle choices affect health, with research showing how our lifestyle can cause health problems and illnesses. The following aspects of our lifestyle can lead to health problems:

- Lack of exercise
- Drinking alcohol
- Smoking
- Poor diet
- Stress

Government

Throughout the 20th century, the government increased its involvement in healthcare. It is now widely accepted that the government's role is to fund medical research and treatment, pass legislation to help prevent disease and illness, and educate people about dangers to their health. For example, in the UK, governments have supported advertising campaigns to educate the British people about the dangers of smoking.

Advances in science

Advances in science have led to a greater understanding of the causes of disease. It is now accepted that germs can cause disease and illness. By the end of the 20th century, it was also understood that some diseases, conditions or disorders are hereditary - which means they are passed from parents to children in genes. This has been proven for:

- Cystic fibrosis
- Sickle cell anaemia
- Down's syndrome

Developments in technology

Rapid developments in technology led to huge advances in the diagnosis and treatment of disease and illness after c.1900. Medicines such as magic bullets and antibiotics can now be mass produced to destroy disease and infection inside the human body.

Machines became more commonly used in hospitals. For example, X-ray machines, CT scans and heart rate monitors enable quick and accurate diagnosis and monitoring of illness.