

**Edexcel GCSE**

**History B** (Schools History Project)  
**Unit 3: Schools History Project Source Enquiry**  
**Option 3A: The transformation of surgery, c1845–c1918**

Wednesday 9 June 2010 – Morning

**Sources Booklet**

Paper Reference

**5HB03/3A**

**Do not return this Sources Booklet with the question paper.**



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### Background information

The development of antiseptic surgery in the 1860s by Joseph Lister led to changes in the number of people surviving operations. To many people this was perhaps the most important improvement in surgery during this period. However, some surgeons opposed its introduction.

This paper presents you with sources about the development of antiseptic surgery. It gives you the opportunity to decide for yourself whether this was a major advance in nineteenth century surgical practice.

**Source A:** Statistics about operations involving amputations performed by Joseph Lister between 1864 and 1870.

Years	Operations	Patients Recovered	Patients Died
1864–66	35 without carbolic acid	19	16
1867–70	40 using carbolic acid	34	6

**Source B:** A display in the Science Museum in London showing an operation using an antiseptic spray in 1877.



**Source C:** From a report in *The Lancet* on 29 August 1868 by the doctor at the Dowlais Iron Works, in South Wales.

The use of carbolic acid in the treatment of wounds and compound fractures has created a revolution in surgery at the Dowlais Iron Works. During the last twelve months I have used it widely in the treatment of common injuries. I think I may say in every case this has been a great success. Before, in serious cases of compound fracture, amputation was the usual treatment, now it is not often used.

**Source D:** From *History of Medicine* by L Hartley, 1984. Here he is writing about Lister's development of antiseptic techniques.

When Lister moved from Glasgow to become Professor of Surgery at King's College Hospital in London in 1877, many surgeons complained that it took too long to keep washing everything. In any case, they refused to believe that infection was spread by dirty operating theatres and tools. People who have new ideas are often regarded as odd. A famous London surgeon at the time could often get a laugh by saying to his students, 'Shut the door quickly or one of Mr Lister's microbes may come in'.

**Source E:** An account about St Thomas's Hospital opened in 1871, as recalled by James Leeson in 1927.

I was a first year student at the newly built St Thomas's Hospital. The building cost £600,000, a large sum of money at the time. But what was the result of all this expenditure? As far as surgery was concerned, practically nothing changed. The old enemy infection was as common as ever. We students were allowed to go straight from the post-mortem room to work on the maternity ward. The ways of the operating surgeon then seem almost hard to believe now. An old ward sister, who had spent her life in the service of the Hospital, once said sadly to me, 'I really think the surgeons do as much harm as good'.

**Source F:** An attack made in 1898 on Lister's methods by Robert Lawson, a specialist in childbirth.

Let us hear no more of the nonsense about the bad results from surgery before Lister, or the nonsense that Lister cured the problem. This is simply not true.

**Source G:** A verse from the 1860s and 1870s celebrating Lister's achievements by G Stroy Meyer. Stroy Meyer was a German surgeon who was a keen follower of Lister's methods in the nineteenth century.

Mankind looks grateful now on thee  
For what you did for surgery,  
And Death's aim must often miss,  
When smelling antiseptic bliss

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