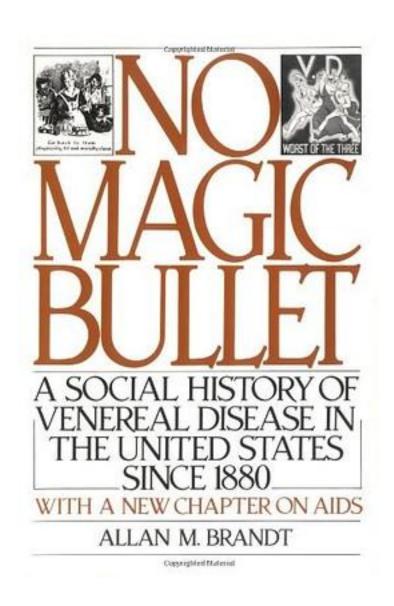
No Magic Bullet



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From Victorian anxieties about syphilis to the current hysteria over herpes and AIDS, the history of venereal disease in America forces us to examine social attitudes as well as purely medical concerns. In No Magic Bullet, Allan M. Brandt recounts the various medical, military, and public health responses that have arisen over the years--a broad spectrum that ranges from the incarceration of prostitutes during World War I to the establishment of required premarital blood tests. Brandt demonstrates that Americans' concerns about venereal disease have centered around a set of social and cultural values related to sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class. At the heart of our efforts to combat these infections, he argues, has been the tendency to view venereal disease as both a punishment for sexual misconduct and an index of social decay. This tension between medical and moral approaches has significantly impeded efforts to develop "magic bullets"--drugs that would rid us of the disease--as well as effective policies for controlling the infections' spread. In the paper edition of No Magic Bullet, Brandt adds to his perceptive commentary on the relationship between medical science and cultural values a new chapter on AIDS. Analyzing this latest outbreak in the context of our previous attitudes toward sexually transmitted diseases, he hopes to provide the insights needed to guide us to the policies that will best combat the disease.

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