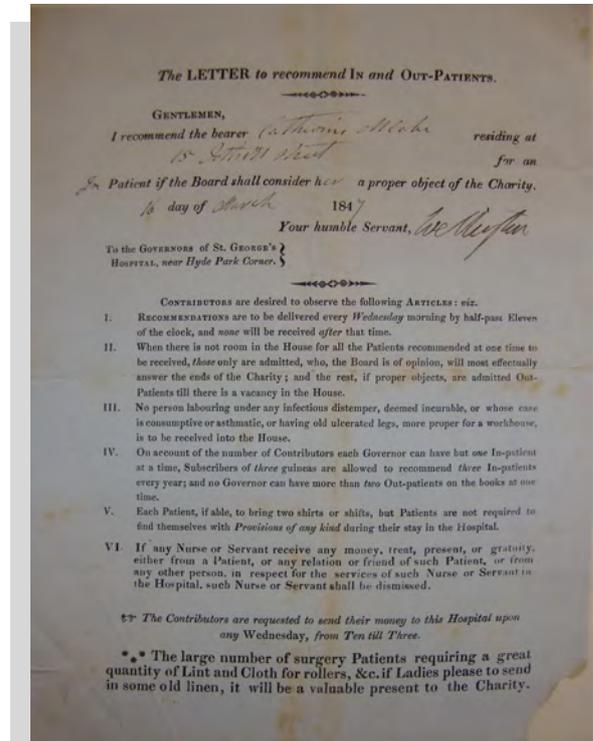


The LETTER to recommend In and Out-Patients St George's Hospital, 1847

This is an 1847 letter recommending a patient to St George's Hospital, London. Established in 1733, St George's was a charitable institution. Its purpose was to provide relief to those poor people who could be rehabilitated, not to the destitute, who were deemed more suitable for the workhouse.

Like most hospitals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was administered by a voluntary board, and funded through charitable donations called subscriptions.

To be admitted as a patient you had to have a letter of recommendation from a subscriber. We think this letter was signed by the Duke of Wellington, who was a subscriber.



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The document lists the rules which the hospital's subscribers had to follow when recommending patients. Sufferers from incurable infectious diseases, tuberculosis, asthma or 'old ulcerated legs' would not be admitted.

Subscribers were reminded of the limits on the number of patients they could recommend. Subscribers who had given more money to the hospital were allowed to recommend more patients.

Even with a recommendation from a subscriber, prospective patients could still be turned away from the hospital if the board decided that they were unsuitable.

Questions

1. What type of person was most likely to know someone who could recommend them as a patient? What type of person was unlikely to be recommended?
2. Why do you think the hospital refused to admit patients with incurable infectious diseases or asthma?
3. What are some of the advantages and limitations of the voluntary hospital system?
4. Make a list of ways in which this voluntary hospital system differs from the modern NHS system.

FURTHER READING

Read more about the history of St George's hospital:
www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/about/history/