

Bud

Penicillin

Triumph and Tragedy

Penicillin is the drug of the twentieth century. It was the first of the antibiotics that, for decades after the Second World War, underpinned a popular belief that infectious disease had at last met its match. With the emergence of 'superbugs' in recent decades these hopes have faded. Across the world, we are warned that widespread antibiotic abuse will inexorably erode the drugs' efficacy and our own earlier confidence in them. Penicillin pulls these different but conjoined stories into a compelling narrative spanning the second half of the twentieth century. Using a wealth of new research, Robert Bud sets the discovery and use of penicillin in the broader context of social and cultural change across the world. He examines the drug's critical contributions to medicine and agriculture, and he investigates the global spread of resistant bacteria as antibiotic use continues to rise. Clearly written and highly topical, his book will be of great interest to historians, scientists, and anyone wishing to understand penicillin's seismic impact on modern life. Penicillin: Triumph and Tragedy Curated by Robert Bud A new exhibition looking back over 50 years will explore changing attitudes to antibiotics and launch at the Science Museum on Thursday 10 May 2007. In the 1950s antibiotics were cast as wonder drugs, but strains of bacteria resistant to penicillin were already widespread. They caused many deaths, most dramatically, infecting hospitalised victims of Asian flu in the autumn of 1957. Now we fear MRSA. How have attitudes, hopes and fears changed in half a century? Press information from Stephen Bromberg, Science Museum Press Office, stephen.bromberg@sciencemuseum.org.uk 020 7942 4352

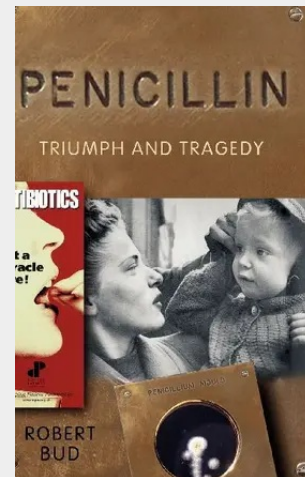
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Penicillin: Triumph and Tragedy Curated by Robert Bud

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