



The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C

Kenneth J. Carpenter

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The first modern survey of the long and fascinating history of the various ideas and theories about the cause of scurvy, the nutritional deficiency disease that has caused (with the exception of famine) the most human suffering in recorded history. Professor Carpenter documents the arguments that led to the numerous theories about the disease and eventually to the isolation and synthesis of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), and illustrates how the changing ideas about scurvy reflected the scientific and medical beliefs of different periods in history. The author also examines the modern claims for the use of very high levels of vitamin C to bring about a state of super-health, and he analyses the most important evidence for and against this practice. This fascinating story in the history of science and medicine will be of interest to the historian, scientist and the general reader.

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