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Surgical semantics: the inoculation of smallpox in early eighteenth-century Britain.*

This paper questions the established narrative concerning the introduction of inoculation to Georgian Britain. Its arrival is typically attributed to the account of Turkish practice by Emanuel Timoni, which first appeared in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* (June 1714), and the advocacy of Mary Wortley Montagu (particularly after her son underwent the operation at Pera in early 1718 and her daughter in London three years later). The novelty of what Timoni himself described has been exaggerated and, conversely, how Wortley Montagu came to pen her 1722 *critique* (albeit anonymous) of the procedure has not been fully appreciated. As a result, we risk misconstruing what many contemporaries thought inoculation would effect therapeutically. At least during the early 1720s, it is debatable that surgeons carrying out the procedure had all accepted the proposition that a particular substance caused a specific disease, or their patients also understood that they were being deliberately infected by a pathogen's introduction into their then-healthy bodies.

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