



Florian Steger

## Asclepius

Medicine and Cult

Translated from the German by Margot M. Saar

### THE AUTHOR

Florian Steger, Full Professor and Director of the Institute of the History, Philosophy and Ethics of Medicine at Ulm University. Before that, since 2011, in the same function at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. Chairman of the Research Ethics Committee at Ulm University. In 2014, Leibniz-Professor at the University of Leipzig. 2018 Medal “Universitatis Lodziensis Amico” by the Łódź University (Poland) and Honorary Professor at Semmelweis University, Budapest (Hungary).

Throughout antiquity patients sought relief and healing from their afflictions in the sanctuaries of Asclepius, the God of healing. The Asclepian healing cult included sacrifices, ablutions and incubation. In their dreams, the patients received therapeutic instructions.

But not only miraculous cures occurred in the Asclepieia, nor were these sacred sites the last refuge of the seriously ill. Using selected examples from the Roman Imperial Period, Florian Steger outlines the healthcare provided in the prominent Asclepian sanctuaries – Epidaurus and Pergamum in particular – and demonstrates that this healthcare was on a par with the contemporary medical culture. Ancient epigraphic healing reports and the patient journal of the celebrated orator Publius Aelius Aristides paint a vivid picture of the daily treatments. The medicine of Asclepius clearly formed an integral part of the Roman Empire’s multifaceted healthcare market.

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