Girolamo Fracastoro Encyclopedia Article

Girolamo Fracastoro

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Girolamo Fracastoro

c. 1478-1553

Italian physician and astronomer remembered for his pioneering work in epidemiology. Syphilis, then rampant in Europe, derives its names from his poem *Syphilis sive morbus Gallicus* (1530). His work *De contagione* (1546) lists the three modes by which contagion spread—simple contact, carriers (such as cloths, bedding, etc.), and from a distance (in which some have seen his unlikely anticipation of microbes). Fracastoro was also the last to defend a theory of solid celestial spheres.