William Douglass Encyclopedia Article

William Douglass

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1691-1752

American physician who initially opposed the inoculation against epidemic smallpox as practiced by Cotton Mather (1663-1728) and Zabdiel Boylston (1680-1766) on the grounds that inoculation was a new, untested, and potentially dangerous procedure. Based on evidence of the safety and effectiveness of inoculation, by 1730 Douglass had become a supporter of inoculation. Douglass published a pioneering account of the first cases of a scarlet fever epidemic that had appeared in Boston in 1735 and 1736.