

Despite the enormous amounts of scholarship devoted to the cult of Isis in the Greek East and Latin West, there has been no study that provides a complete and fully contextualized picture of the role that healing played in her cult. Both detailed studies of the goddess and general treatments have reached questionable or inadequate conclusions about this aspect of Isis worship, often due to an uncritical treatment of some of their sources. The basic fact that Isis was frequently called upon by worshipers with health concerns is not in doubt, but there are important issues that have not been fully addressed, such as the degree to which sources reveal Isis to have been a preserver of health rather than a healer, whether her medical prowess was on display throughout the Greco-Roman world or only at certain sites, to what extent Isis could be distinguished from other divinities linked to health, and precisely how the therapeutic aspects of her cult functioned. That Isis was among the divinities associated with medical wisdom in Pharaonic times has led to the conclusion that she was an important healing goddess in Egypt during Ptolemaic and Roman times, but the best evidence for her having a solo medical practice is a papyrus petition by a farmer who was seeking medical treatment at an *Iseum* (*PTebt* I 44), the Christian sources providing evidence for therapeutic incubation at her Menouthis sanctuary in Late Antiquity (especially Zach. Schol., *Vita Severi*, pp. 17-19 ed. Kugener), a Demotic *ostrakon* from the Hor Archive indicating that this cult official at Saqqâra had sought from Isis a remedy for the ailing Ptolemaic queen (*O.Hor* 28, ll. 15-17), the oft-quoted statement by Diodorus Siculus that Isis would regularly visit the sick in their dreams and cure them at one or more unspecified locales (Diod. Sic. 1.25.2-5), and some magical texts of uncertain significance (e.g., Kotansky, *Amulets* No. 61, Meyer/Smith No. 49). Other sources from post-Pharaonic Egypt pertaining to Isis and health have her paired up with another divinity, making it impossible to determine whether her inclusion was significant (e.g., *P.Amh.* II 35, *P.Mil* II 28). This problem also exists for some of the most important sources from beyond Egypt (e.g., *IDelos* 2116, 2117), where, although this has not been recognized, it is a matter of some mystery to what extent Isis stood out as a healing goddess. Instead of being cautioned by the remarkably few examples of individuals attributing a cure to Isis (e.g., *SEG* 26, 821, *CIL* XIV 4290), scholars have pointed to her occasional association or identification with Hygieia as well as dedicatory inscriptions employing the generic epithet ‘*Soteira*’ or generic formulas such as ‘*hyper soterias*’ and ‘*pro salute*,’ neither of which necessarily had anything to do with the practice of divine medicine, in order to support their claims that Isis was a prominent healing goddess. Although Tibullus indicates that in Rome Isis was a popular healer (Tib. 1.3.27-28) – one of many, of course – it is arguably more telling that there is a nearly total absence of praise for Isis as healer in the lengthy aretalogies that hailed her for so many other abilities and accomplishments. It is worth considering, therefore, whether in representing Isis as a goddess widely valued for her therapeutic abilities the scholarly community has been overstating the case, especially for her cult outside of Egypt.