"I rede þou lerne wel þis of me"
Advice giving in Middle English medical discourse

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Advice giving has been one of the main concerns of instructional medical discourse in the history of English. These texts tell their readers how they should behave in order to preserve or regain their health. In this contribution, we focus on the Middle English period up to 1500 with a brief look at some earlier manifestations in Old English. Our data comes from the digital corpus of *Middle English Medical Texts* (MEMT). We approach the speech act of advice giving through a careful analysis of relevant meta-illocutionary expressions, i.e. terms that are used to either perform a speech act (performative uses) or to talk about them (narrative uses). In MEMT, only two lexical items are attested, *rede,* which goes back to Old English and occurs mainly in the older text tradition of remedy books, and *counsel,* which is more often attested in the specialized texts and in the surgical texts. The examples also show that advice giving in MEMT is not restricted to issues of preserving and regaining health but extends to courteous behavior in the interaction between the medical professionals and their patients.

1. Introduction

Most medical texts from the early periods are instructive. They give readers advice on how to live in order to preserve their health or to regain it once they have lost it, and they also instruct how to prepare medicines. In a present-day context, advice giving has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention both in medical and in non-medical contexts, but studies on advice giving in the early periods are still lacking (but see Schrott 2014 for an investigation of advice giving in Old Spanish texts). This article sets out to fill this gap. It explores forms and functions of advice giving in medical discourse with a focus on Old English (OE) and Middle English (ME) texts, relating strategies of the past to modern practices as described in the recent literature. Different vernacular realizations of advice giving are analyzed in their socio-historical context with different types of readers and across time.

Advice giving is seen as part of a wider pragmatic space (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000). We see speech acts as fuzzy entities and pragmatic variables (cf. Terkourafi 2011; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2012). Advice giving overlaps with such neighboring speech acts as directives, recommendations and warnings. They are all concerned with something that the addressee might or should do at some point in the future, but they differ in the extent to which the speaker exerts pressure on the addressee. Advice giving can also be conceptualized as being part of the pragmatic space of sharing and helping (Põldvere, De Felice, & Paradis 2022: 1). Here, advising is seen as a special case of informing, which involves the offering of help for the addressee and has a fit from me-to-you, i.e., from the speaker to the addressee who is supposed to benefit from the advice.

We deal with the special language of medicine of the early periods and our texts have not been assessed from the present angle before. Our data gathering is performed partly digitally with corpus linguistic methods and partly by qualitative reading.[1] We build on both electronic corpus searches of

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[1]   Cf. the data collecting methods of modern studies, which are very different with questionnaires, interviews and Conversation Analytical methods.

lexical items and apply qualitative analyses with contextual assessments to detect alternative expressions and devices to enhance the advice giving. The main sources were the relevant dictionaries and the digital corpus of *Middle English Medical Texts* (MEMT 1375–1500), which covers the early vernacularization period.

We shall first explain our theoretical approach with meta-illocutionary uses of speech act verbs and corresponding nouns in focus, then go through the relevant lexical items and describe our data. In the empirical part, we proceed from OE to ME keeping our focus on meta-illocutionary uses of speech act verbs and nouns but outlining other detected functions as well. At the end, we summarize our observations about the variation and diachronic development of pertinent lexical items, but we also discuss an important change in interpersonal language use in advice giving that emerged with our surgical examples.

2. Advice giving and the meta-illocutionary lexicon

Giving advice, either solicited or unsolicited, appears to be a very common communicative need. People regularly ask each other and receive responses in the form of recommendations about what they should – or should not – do, and how they should – or should not – behave. It is not surprising, therefore, that advice giving has been researched from many different perspectives and in a large range of different contexts (see for instance the contributions in Limberg & Locher 2012 or in MacGeorge & Van Swol 2018, and for a recent overview see Põldvere, De Felice, & Paradis 2022). Advice giving belongs to Searle's (1976) large class of directives because it is concerned with things that are to be done by the addressee at some point in the future, but they differ from requests, commands and other more prototypical cases of directives in that the speaker may be indifferent as to whether the addressee performs the suggested act or not, but assumes that it might be in the best interest of the addressee to do so. There is a rich literature on advice giving in conversational settings. Adolphs (2008), for instance, investigates a range of speech acts, including suggestions, in the *Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English* (CANCODE), and Põldvere, De Felice, and Paradis (2022) use the *London-Lund Corpus of spoken British English* to investigate advice giving in conversational data.

In medical settings, advice giving appears to be particularly prominent. People are concerned how to preserve or regain their health and for this they turn to other people whom they consider to be more knowledgeable in this respect. In the medical setting, they get such advice from medical professionals (see Locher 2006; Locher & Turnherr 2017; D'Angelo & D'Angelo 2018; Stivers *et al.* 2018). There is a clear distinction between an advice giver and an advice seeker or advice recipient with an assumed epistemic difference between the roles (DeCapua & Huber 1995). The advice giver is in possession of some knowledge or information that they believe would benefit the advice seeker or recipient who may not possess the same knowledge or information. In many settings, the distribution of roles is pre-assigned because the setting specifies who is supposed to be more knowledgeable and who is supposed to be in need of advice or instruction. Zhang and Hyland (2021), for instance, investigated advice giving in the context of theses supervisions where the roles between advice giver and advice seeker are clearly distributed. In medical settings, too, it is generally clear who is in the role of advice giver and who is in the role of advice seeker or advice recipient. The participants do not have to negotiate these roles. This stands in contrast to everyday conversations between equals, where such negotiations are common (see Adolphs 2008: 91).

The nature of our data makes it difficult to automatically retrieve instances of advice seeking and advice giving. Our method, therefore, is both eclectic and exploratory. In general, there are two ways of investigating speech acts in historical speech act analysis (see Jucker 2024a; 2024b: Chapter 3). The researcher can search for manifestations of a speech act by searching for elements that are known to occur in such manifestations. This knowledge may have been provided by earlier research or by manually searching carefully chosen sample texts. For our purposes, this method appears to be of limited value. Preliminary searches and our familiarity with the data suggest that advice giving was not sufficiently conventionalized for recurrent patterns to emerge. This is also true for other speech acts, such as apologies or requests. Recent research has shown that historically, their conventionalization and the development of typical expressions marking their illocutionary force, such as *sorry* and *please*, are relatively recent (see, for instance, Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Faya Cerqueiro 2007; Jucker 2018).

The second method consists of an analysis of meta-illocutionary expressions denoting a particular speech act. The terms "meta-illocutionary expression" and "meta-illocutionary lexicon" (i.e., the collection of all meta-illocutionary expressions) appear to have been introduced by Schneider (2017; 2021; 2022; see also Schoppa 2022). It is a more precise term than "meta-pragmatic expressions" (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: Chapter 6; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2014) because it focuses more specifically on expressions that are used to talk about speech acts. The meta-illocutionary lexicon provides a first-order perspective on what speakers or writers of a language find to be salient pragmatic acts. It comprises names for those pragmatic acts that they need to talk about. This is central for our study because we are going to explore the pragmatic act of advice giving mainly through the lens of the meta-illocutionary lexicon.

Schneider (2017; 2021; 2022) and Schoppa (2022) provide several categorizations of the functions of meta-illocutionary expressions. In everyday discourse, they can have a performative, reporting, problematizing or challenging function (Schneider 2017: 230). Schoppa (2022: 71) distinguishes six functions: performative, problematizing, reporting, clarifying, naming and commenting. The distinction between these types is not always easy, but in our data the focus is clearly on the performative function. Meta-illocutionary expressions are regularly used to perform the named speech act. It seems that in medieval medical texts the selection of additional functions is somewhat different from those mentioned in the literature for present-day contexts, but the main line is in accordance with previous research. It has been shown that in OE and ME speech acts, such as requests for instance, were regularly performed through explicit performatives (see, for instance, Bergner 1992; Kohnen 2000).

3. Early English medical texts

The first vernacular English medical texts were remedy books with recipes and prognostications that survive from the eleventh century. After the late OE period there is a gap of about two centuries before medical writings emerged in a larger scale with first vernacular translations, adaptations, and some

more original compositions in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[2] ME medical texts can be grouped into three sets according to their underlying traditions (see Voigts 1984). Several surgical texts were rendered into English at this point. Some of them derive from university settings and belong to top medieval science with theoretical passages. Mostly they are, however, instructive and provide some very interesting examples of advice giving in the learned style and abound in features typical of the scholastic thought style (Taavitsainen & Pahta 1995; Taavitsainen 2002; Taavitsainen & Pahta 2004; Taavitsainen & Schneider 2018).

Another group consists of specialized texts in early translations of e.g., ancient authorities' learned texts, but texts pertaining to natural philosophy, reproduction and theoretical subjects do not contain advice giving as they are mostly expository and argumentative.[3] Some of the specialized texts are, however, more practical and some come close to the third category of remedy books. Middle English versions of Latin texts show difficulties in rendering abstract ideas in a language whose lexical or syntactic resources were not developed for expressing scientific ideas (see Pahta & Carrillo Linares 2006: 116). Alongside with the surgical and specialized texts, the third group consists of a large body of more practical works. This category provides direct continuation from the Old English leech books with traits of learned medicine. Some elements from classical sources are added and mixed with oral folk traditions such as *materia medica* with herbal lore, charms, and prognostications (see Figure 1). In addition, practical verses in rhymed couplets also belong to this group, forming the most popular layer of medieval medical texts. They were easy to memorize and repeat on suitable occasions.

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2   There was a pan-European vernacularization boom as translations of Latin were made into several languages at about the same time, and knowledge of Arab learning spread to Europe (Siraisi 1990).

3   Few texts of the highest level were known in the last millennium. Pahta's edition of *De spermate* (1998) made a rare academic text on reproduction available to scholars. The identification of some important texts is fairly recent (for the Hippocratic commentary, see Tavormina 2006). Galen's texts have a complicated history (for details and editions, see Pahta *et al.* 2016).
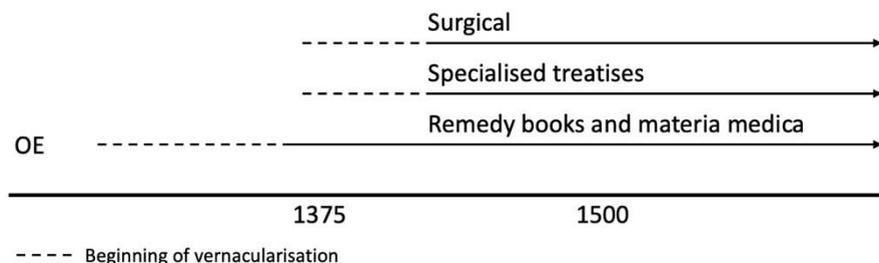
Figure 1. Chronology of three medical text traditions (modified from Taavitsainen, Pahta, & Mäkinen 2005).

Chronologically our data begins with some Old English examples. To detect manifestations of advice giving we consulted all available Old English scientific and medical sources and checked the Old English part of the *Helsinki Corpus*. We did not find very much, but a leech book dating from the eleventh century provides some examples pertinent to our research task. Next, we assessed the late medieval period with digital searches of the MEMT corpus. It covers the early vernacularization period 1375-1500 and contains all editions of medieval texts of the period known to us at the time the corpus was submitted for publication (Taavitsainen, Pahta, & Mäkinen 2005). Texts range from learned scholastic treatises to popular verse. Our searches yielded a fruitful harvest of meta-illocutionary uses of speech act verbs and nouns, and they also revealed some other interesting alternative ways of giving advice and devices of enhancing the advice.

The readers or listeners of early medical advice included a broad range of people. In addition to learned doctors and other practitioners of the medical profession like surgeons and barber-surgeons, readers included lay people, such as literate women and household members. Useful texts like health guides and regimen texts were often read aloud thus broadening the target audience even to the illiterate. The authors were a more homogeneous group, as it was customary for learned physicians, surgeons, and other medical authors to write for both specialists and lay people.

4. Meta-illocutionary expressions of advice giving in Middle English

In our search for a relevant set of meta-illocutionary expressions of advice giving in the early periods, we relied on the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*, which provided a list of nouns and verbs (see below; cf. also Milfull (2004), who used the same source for lexical items on advice giving in Middle Scots). In addition, we relied on our own familiarity with vernacular medical texts and the recurrent patterns used in them, such as imperative forms of verbs, deontic collocations, and other modal expressions with a directive force. For instance, instruction in remedy books including recipes employ direct commands with imperative forms of verbs. They can be regarded as pertinent to our study as well, and although not at the heart of the present task, they are important in marking the neighboring speech act of giving directions. Furthermore, some patterns of strengthening the illocutionary force of the speech act also emerged.

According to the *Historical Thesaurus* of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, there are quite a number of nouns and verbs in the semantic field of advice giving. Table 1 provides an overview of all the items that go back to ME (i.e. first attested before 1500).

Table 1. Lexical items of advice giving c. 1100–1500.

Lemma	Date	Meaning
Nouns		
rede	Old English–	Counsel or advice given by one person to another. Also: †a piece of advice (obsolete).
rathe	c1175–1300	Counsel, advice. Also: a counsellor, a friend. Cf. rede, n.
counsel	?c1225–	Opinion as to what ought to be done given as the result of consultation; aid or instruction for directing the judgement; advice, direction.
governail	a1382–1500	Guidance, advice, counsel. Also: contrivance.
advice	c1390–	Opinion given or offered as to what action to take; counsel; recommendation.

advisement	1409–	Advice or guidance as to what action to take; counsel; (also) a piece of advice. Cf. advice, n. 2.
vising	c1480	Advice, counsel.
Transitive verbs		
rede	Old English-1650	To suggest (a course of action) by way of advice; to advise (a thing), to give (counsel). transitive. With simple object. Frequently with cognate.
rothe	c1175-1400	transitive. To counsel, advise (a person). Also reflexive and intransitive.
berede	a1225-1350	transitive. To advise, inform, counsel; to plan.
counsel	1297-	To give or offer counsel or advice to (a person); to advise.
inform	c1350	transitive. To give instruction to (a person, the mind, etc.); to educate, teach, train; (later more generally) to impart knowledge or learning to.
Intransitive verbs		
rede	Old English-1591	intransitive. To give advice or instruction. Obsolete.
rothe	c1175-1400	transitive. To counsel, advise (a person). Also reflexive and intransitive.
counsel	?c1430-1842	intransitive. To give or offer counsel or advice. With to: to give advice to a particular effect or purpose. Obsolete.
to give to rede	c1460-1540	to give to rede: to state by way of advice, to advise. Obsolete.
advise	1481-	intransitive. To give advice or counsel.

The OE repertoire is narrow with one item only, the precursor of *rede.* Its attestations in the early period are few, but increase in ME. The predominating item in MEMT is, however, *counsel.* We will focus on its meta-illocutionary use and different attestations, but we found examples of other uses as well that have not been mentioned in the literature before. According to OED *advise* came to the language in the fourteenth century, but it was not recorded in our data, which is limited to medical and scientific texts only.

In the earliest period,[4] we found both the masculine noun *ræd* (also *a-ræd*) 'counsel or advice; what is advisable, benefit, advantage' and the

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4   We are grateful to Leena Kahlas-Tarkka for checking the relevant item (*rede*) in the OE Corpus, the OE part of the *Helsinki Corpus* and the relevant dictionaries, as well as for providing the examples with translations.

corresponding verb *rædan* with the meaning 'to counsel, give advice; to ask advice; to deliberate; to suggest (a course of action)' (s.v. Bosworth-Toller). Two originally distinct verbs seem to have coalesced in this verb form, and therefore a wide variety of meanings, including 'to read' have been recorded. First-hand evidence of the meaning 'counsel' is given by Ælfric in his *Glossary* (G1 B1.9.2 1) *consilium ræd.*

The wealth of religious writings, chronicles and laws in OE yield several instances of *ræd*, whereas the limited amount of scientific and medical writing does not give much evidence for the use of this word. The only relevant example for the medical or scientific register can be found in the *Leechbook*: "**Ræd** bið gif he nimð mealwan mid hire ciþum, seoþe on wætere, sele drincan." 'It is advisable to take mallow with its seeds, to boil in water and give to drink.' (LcH II (2) B.21.2.1.2.2.)

Another pertinent example from the Old English period which also advises and exhorts to wise behavior has been recorded: "Ne acse þu nanre wicce **rædes**, se sech þu riht æt deaden: soþlice god ascuneð swylce þing." 'Do not ask for advice from a witch/magician but look for justice from those who are dead: truly God detests such things.' (*Proverbs* 1(Cox) B7.1 Distics of Cato.)

5. Manifestations of advice giving in MEMT

In the MEMT corpus (1375-1500), the form *rede* is attested 378 times, but the great majority of instances denote either the verb 'read' or the color 'red'.[5] Few examples in the meaning of 'giving advice' are found in a specialized text and the remedy-book tradition had some, but in general it is not very common. *Counsel* (with spelling variants) prevails with a total of 42 hits and occurs particularly frequently in surgical texts, but all categories showed some examples (see Table 2).

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5   E.g. all 36 hits in *De spermate* at the learned end of the data referred to the color.

Table 2. Spread of *rede* and *counsel* (including spelling variants) as meta-illocutionary expressions in MEMT in performative and narrative functions.

Source file	*rede*		*counsel*		Total
	Perf.	**Narr.**	**Perf.**	**Narr.**	
Surgical texts					
arderne_fistula.rtf				6	6
chauliac_ulcers.rtf			1	5	6
chauliac_wounds.rtf				4	4
chirurgie_de_1392.rtf			1	1	2
lanfranc_chirurgia_magna_1.rtf				1	1
lanfranc_chirurgia_magna_2.rtf				1	1
mondeville_chirurgie.rtf				1	1
Specialized texts					
benvenutus_grassus.rtf	1		4		5
caxton_ars_moriendi.rtf				2	2
daniel_liber_uricrisiarum_2.rtf		1		1	2
torrella_tretece_of_the_pokkis.rtf				1	1
Remedy books					
a_tretys_of_diverse_herbis.rtf	1				1
astrological_compendium.rtf	2				2
bloodletting.rtf	2				2
caxton_gouernayle_of_helthe.rtf	1			1	2
de_caritate_the_priuyte_of_priuyteis.rtf				3	3
leechbook_1.rtf				1	1
practical_verse.rtf	2		1		3
quinte_essence.rtf				1	1
regimen_sanitatis.rtf				2	2
rupescissa_remedies.rtf		1			1
secreet_of_secreetes.rtf			1	2	3
sidrak_and_bokkus.rtf	1	1			2
when_the_mone_is_in_aries.rtf				1	1
Total	**10**	**3**	**8**	**34**	**55**

Table 2 shows an interesting difference between the two meta-illocutionary expressions. *Rede* is used more often in its performative function while *counsel* is used more often in its narrative function. The number of occurrences is small, but a chi-square test shows that the difference is significant at the .01 level (χ^2=15.1032, df=2). This may be meaningful in the sense that *rede* is the older form going back to Old English when the performative use of speech act verbs appears to have been more common (cf. Bergner 1992; Kohnen 2000). *Counsel*, on the other hand, is more frequent in the more recent text traditions of specialized texts and surgical texts. But at this point, this can be no more than speculative. We now turn to manifestations of these meta-illocutionary expressions in the three text traditions.

5.1. Surgical texts

Chirurgie de 1392 (with an alternative name *Compilacioun of sirurgie*) is not a direct translation but a more original compilation from various sources and personal observations by a London surgeon, possibly also physician, from the year 1392. Example (1) comes from a preamble to the third part of the text. It records an emphatic plea to the readers of the text in a word pair where the first component gives special coloring to the second (see Pahta & Nevanlinna 1997).

1   In þe þridde partie I haue putt an antidotarie of sirurgie wiþ watris, emplastris, poudris, oilis & oynementis, & oþere dyuers medicyns in general; wherfor **I praie & counseile ʒou** þat vsen þe worchinge in þis doctr=i=ne, contynue þa=t= ʒe ben gr=a=cious & helpinge to þe pore for goddis sake & to þe riche for a competent salarie. (chirurgie_de_1392.rtf)

The most famous medieval surgeon, Guy de Chauliac (c. 1300–1368), taught at the University of Montpellier and wrote in Latin. Several vernacular versions appeared in various languages, e.g., both full and incomplete versions of his *Chirurgia magna* and other works circulated widely in Middle English. The first scholarly editions date from the nineteenth century and the most recent came out some decades ago (see MEMT bibliography). Differences between them are found both in syntax and vocabulary. These texts contain

several passages in the logocentric scholastic style e.g., in meta-illocutionary performative uses of the verb with the first-person pronoun, as in (2). In (3) the past tense verb occurs in the third person recording his past action; this is a clear case of narrative use (see Werlich 1982).

2   ffor þat in drawing out it is oft-tymeȝ ybroken, ȝe, bot of þis **I consaile þat** þe tenteȝ be bounden with a threde þat if þai cleued-to And were profounded to mych, þai may be
(chauliac_ulcers.rtf)

3   And if it war nede, be þer a litel y-added of opio or of mandrace, **as counsaileþ william**
(chauliac_wounds.rtf)

In (4) below the noun *counsaile* is used descriptively. The scholastic style favored impersonal expressions and the passive voice; sometimes the third person refers to the author and provides a distancing device (see Taavitsainen & Pahta 1998). In this early period the language of writing science had not conventionalized yet and there is a great deal of fluctuation.

4   if þe bone be corrupte, it is þe **counsaile** of hym for to kut þe flesh & for to vncouere þat bone as mych as ...
(chauliac_wounds.rtf)

The same text shows another passage in (5) with similar scholastic features. The reference to G is likely to be an abbreviation for Galen, the number one authority of medieval medicine, and the accuracy of the reference indicates a learned provenance; Avicen and Albucasis were also frequently cited in scholastic writings.

5   Wondeȝ þat nedeþ sewyng aboue, which ar made bi al þe transuers of principale musculeȝ & þat smyteþ þe grete veyneȝ & arterieȝ & nerues & medulle, bringeþ in most perile. **ffirst counsaileþ G in primo 6.=i= amphorismorum**, þe vesic kutte or þe brayne or þe herte or diafragma or any of þe subtile entraleȝ or þe lyuer or þe wombe, it is mortale after þat of 5=ti= amphorismorum, Quibuscumque ydemata &c:. fforsoþ, if þe bone be corrupte, **it is þe**

counsaile of hym for to kut þe flesh & for to vncouere þat bone as mych as shale be possible, & þat with rasours & corrosyueʒ, as it shal be said with-inforþ of an vlcerate legge.

If, forsoþ, it be not possible to þe þat þu make or do inscisioun, **Auicen counsaileþ** wasshyngeʒ wiþ clisterieʒ **after þe maner of Albucasis**;

(chauliac_wounds.rtf)

John Arderne is one of the best-known figures of medieval medicine in England and, as was customary at the time, he wrote in Latin. He practised surgery first in Newark, Notts. from 1349 to 1370, and then in London. His works circulated in at least four different vernacular translations after 1400.

In the surgical tradition, *counsel* often occurs in the form *to ask counsel*, as in (6), (7) and (8) taken from *Fistula in ano.* All examples below are narrative and record past actions in the third person, and many of them come from case reports where the author boasts about his own surgical skills that surpassed all others'.

6   by The forsaid sir Adam, forsoth, suffrand fistulam in ano, made **for to ask counsel** at all the lecheʒ and cirurgienʒ that he myʒt fynde in Gascone, at Burdeux, at Briggerac, Tolows, and Neyrbon,
(arderne_fistula.rtf)

7   Aftirward I cured sir Reynald Grey, lord of Wilton in Waleʒ and lord of Schirlond biside Chesterfelde, whiche **asked counsel** at the most famose leches of yngland, and none availed hym. Aftirward I cured sir Henry Blakborne, clerk, Tresorer . . .
(arderne_fistula.rtf)

8   in the ʒere of oure lord 1370, I come to london, and ther I cured Iohn Colyn , Mair of Northampton, that **asked counsel** at many lecheʒ. Aftirward I helid or cured Hew Denny, ffisshmanger of london, in Briggestrete; and William Polle (arderne_fistula.rtf)

5.2. Specialized texts

Example (9) comes from Benvenutus Grassus' text explaining the procedure of an eye operation. The meta-illocutionary expression explicitly flags the sentence as a piece of advice.

9   and þere sotylly I kut without any trouble of the tonycle. And þan
     hade I rede ij nedyls myghtyly knytt togeder ...
     (benvenutus_grassus.rtf)

Benvenutus Grassus was probably an Italian thirteenth-century ophthalmologist. The text deals with eye diseases and injuries and circulated in various European vernaculars. The ME version represents an independent translation of the Latin original with added material from different sources and gives evidence of difficulties in rendering learned texts into the vernacular. On the basis of phrases like "Moreoure, quod Beneuucius, I wyl þat ȝe practysers" the text seems to be a paraphrase or an adaptation of the Latin original rather than a translation.

The phrase *I counsel you* occurs four times in this text and conveys a didactic tone in the style of writing scholastic science. The imperative form is also present in advice giving for playing safe with cures in order to keep a good name, as in (10).

10   **I counsel yow** that when ȝe se thys maner of pannycle not new but
     incarnate and harded vpon the tonycle of the eye, **take yt not** in
     cure, for ȝe may haue no worschype þerof but hurtyng your name
     and fame among the people.
     (benvenutus_grassus.rtf)

Another case in specialized treatises occurs in the vernacular translation of Henry Daniel's *Liber uricrisiarum* that dates from 1379 and achieved a wide circulation. It is based on Isaac Judaeus' *De urinis* and deals with diagnostics by urine and uroscopy. The mid-fifteenth century manuscript that was used as base for the edition belonged to a barber-surgeon of London, giving a reliable indication of its readers. In (11), the phrase *we taken counsell*, shows an authoritative use of *we*. The repetitive word pair is used strategically to interpret the word of foreign origin (*counsel*) with the native equivalent (*red*).

11 For when we will witten and knowen the state and the disposicioun
of manys body wythinnin, and namely of þe reyns, **we taken
counsel and red** at vryn. Also, vryn is seyde of this Latyn worde
vrere, that is to seyn "brenyng, as fyre or hote thing dothe," for hit is
be wey of kende hote and drye. Be reson of his dryehede he is
desictatif, þat is forto sey, dryend;
(daniel_liber_uricrisiarum_2.rtf)

The third case in this category is found in Torrella's *Tretece of the pokkis*,
a specialized text on syphilis from the very last years of the fifteenth century.
In (12), the authority is ascribed to the centre of learned scholastic medicine in
Paris and the noun *counsel* is used in a narrative clause.

12 The tretece of the pokkis: And the cure by **the nobull counsell of
parris** A syrop mervelus & expert with weche inumerable hathe
been cured and allso preservid from all maner of the skyn & of
dolors of the pannicles lacertts & nervis.
(torrella_tretece_of_the_pokkis.rtf)

5.3. Remedy books

In this category, the *secreta secretum* tradition circulated widely in different
versions (see the MEMT catalogue) and contains several instances of the verb
counsel. Allegedly these texts contained Aristotle's teaching to Alexander, or as
the preface expressed its provenence states "This booke ...was sent fro þe grete
philosophir Aristotill to the nobill prince King Alexander." Example (13) begins
eloquently with direct address preceded by the vocative interjection *O!*

13 Qwerfor, o Alysaundyr, if þu vse this thow schalt vse none odyr, for
þis suffysith. Nor þu schalt neuir blede nor be boystid but be þe
consel of a man þat is experte in astronomye, and for þis cause þe
profytabylnes of medycinal kunnyng is exaltyd in þat, and þe natural
wylle is enclyned and claryfiyd in þat.
(de_caritate_the_priuyte_of_priuyteis.rtf)

A combination of a directive command in the imperative form and an *if-*clause of volition with a second explicit exhortation "obserue my counsel" is found in the same text, see (14).

14   Knowe þan þat þer be of metys sondry ... and confortid to dygeste þe alymentys. **Gouerne** wele þan þi body if thow wult þat it be in hele, and **obserue my counsel**, for þat is to þe chef solas.
(de_caritate_the_priuyte_of_priuyteis.rtf)

In (15), *counseile* is used in a performative function in advice giving for the well-being of both the body and the mind.

15   and this shall take the fleume from thy mouthe and stomac, and yiueth hete to the body, and driueth awey the wynde, and yiueth good sauoure. **Moreouer I counseile the** that thou comon often with the noble and wise men of thy reame, of alle suche maters as thou hast a-doo, and gouerne thaim graciously aftir the custumes.
(secreet_of_secreetes.rtf)

In comparison, the other types of texts within the remedybook tradition favor the native *rede*. The simplest examples are found in practical verse. In (16), advice for the common cure of bloodletting carries an authoritative tone with the first person singular. The rhyme words *blede* / *I rede* served as a memory aid and *I rede* had the function of a standard line filler as well.

16   And fro scall withouten lesynge.
    ij at the temples ther most **blede**
    ffor Stoppynge and Akynge, **I Rede;**
    (practical_verse.rtf)

Other instances can be found in herbal lore and in an astrological compendium, in (17) and (18).

17   Wha~ne it is yus to gedere browt **I rede** ye gaddererys for ȝete hem nowth, Y=e= tyme y=t= he on hy~ bere Fro alle perylys it wyl hy~

were
(a_tretys_of_diverse_herbis.rtf)

18   xxviij is noght gude, ne at the xxx; & er thu bled in tha that folus, **I rede** the a-bide: The iij day & the iiij, & the xviij als
(astrological_compendium.rtf)

A somewhat different instance of *rede* is found in the narrative function in a collection of recipes, in (19).

19   yit sum men mowe **rede** and inquere of þe heuenely cunnyng and bigynnyng of quynte essence þat I haue y-shewid here bifore.
(rupescissa_remedies.rtf)

Frequent examples of *rede* occur in a popular encyclopedia *Sidrak and Bokkus* (see example 20), written in a question-and-answer format in rhyming couplets as a dialogue between a Christian philosopher Sidrak and a heathen king Bokkus. Their discussion can be characterized as a brief digest of medieval learning in science, interspersed with theology and moral teaching.[6]

20   Þerfore, I seie, amys þei do Þat etith more þanne mister is to, Ouþer drinke, wheþer it be: **I rede þou lerne wel þis of me.**
(sidrak_and_bokkus.rtf)

Counsel is not common in the leech book category, but an emphatic example of the meta-illocutionary use occurs in an anonymous recipe collection with dietary advice, in (21). It employs a repetitive word pair with the verbs *admonish* and *counsel* that work into the same direction.

21   Jn all wise **J monyche and counsell** the that thow sett not lyttell by þis confection ffor I prevyd it full notable in many cawsis . . .
(leechbook_1.rtf)

Advice giving with *counsel* occurs in a lunary text, too. Astrology was an esteemed branch of science in the Middle Ages with the aim of indicating

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6   We selected its emphatic phrase of enhancing advice as our motto for this article.

appropriate times for various actions in a broad range of texts from learned treatises to popular moonbooks (see Taavitsainen 1988). A particularly intriguing case of advice giving according to the moon is found in the *Guild-book of the Barber Surgeons of York*, a professional institutional book from 1486. It shows the fuzzy border of professional and popular; astrology was observed in medical treatments in all levels. In this lunary text, appropriate times are pointed out simply by *yt ys gude* and the opposite by *yt ys yll and perilous*, and the prognostications are given for all kinds of actions in a playful tone. Medical rules are concise and based on the *homo signorum* doctrine, e.g. in Aries it is forbidden "to do ought tyll a manys hede" and Lion gives comprehensive advice for the Canicular days (see Taavitsainen 1994). In (22), the advice for Aquarius achieves a jocular tone, which is rare in medieval medical texts.

22 Whene the Mone ys in the Watirwarde, that ys callyde Aquarius, **yt ys gude** to wake one the watters and to deyll wyth them, and to speke wyth frendis and to aske them of helpe and of **counsell**, and for to wede wyues, and to enture into religione, and for to founde houses, and for to by aritages, and for to enture into lordschyppes and newe possessions
(when_the_mone_is_in_aries.rtf)

6. Advice giving and courtesy

Several of the examples quoted in the previous section show the authors' concern for the interpersonal aspect of their texts. They give advice on how to preserve or regain one's health, but they also give professional advice on appropriate behavior in medical situations. In his surgical text, Lanfrank, for instance, advocates that advice should only be given if asked for, women should not be talked to foolishly, nor should the patient or his servants be criticized. Instead, the patient should be addressed courteously (example 23).

23 be he trewe, vnbeliche, & plesyngliche bere he him-silf to hise pacientis; speke he noon ribawdrie in þe sike mannis hous. Ȝeue he no **counseil**, buts he be axid; ne speke he wiþ no womman in folie in þe sik mannes hous; ne chide not wiþ þe sike man ne wiþ noon of

hise meyne, but **curteisli** speke to þe sijk man, and in almaner
sijknes bihote him heele.
(lanfranc_chirurgia_magna_1.rtf)

Mondeville and John Arderne provide similar advice on good behavior in
(24) and (25).

24   þe pacientis owen to obeien in alle maner þingis þa=t= ben
      parteynynge to þe cure of here syknesse ouþir maladie, & þei schal
      not wiþstonde **þe counseil** of her surgian in no wise /
      (mondeville_chirurgie.rtf)

25   And it is seid in anoþer place, "Shrewed speche corrumpith gode
      maners." When seke men, forsoth, or any of tham bysyde comeþ to
      the leche to aske help or **counsel** of hym, be he noȝt to tham ouer
      felle ne ouer homely, but mene in beryng aftir the askyngis of the
      personeȝ; to som reuerently, to som comonly. ffor after wise men,
      Ouer moche homelynes bredeþ dispisyng.
      (arderne_fistula.rtf)

In fact, courteous behavior is a recurrent topic in MEMT as (26) and (27)
illustrate.

26   To euery tale, sonn, gyff not credence;
      Be not hasty nor sodenly vengeabill,
      To poure folke do no violence,
      Curteys of langage; of fedyng mesurabyll,
      On sondry metis not gredy at þe tabill,
      In feding gentill; prudent in daliaunce;
      To sey þe best sette al-wey þy plesaunce.
      (practical_verse.rtf)

27   Haue the leche also clene handes and wele shapen naileȝ & clensed
      fro all blaknes and filthe. And be he **curtaise** at lordeȝ bordeȝ, and
      displese he noȝt in wordes or dedes to the gestes syttyng by;
      (arderne_fistula.rtf)

These examples provide a clear link to the conduct book tradition starting in the Renaissance period, mostly in response to Italian courtesy and conduct books, which were widely translated and read in England. Paternoster (2022: Chapter 2), in her study of etiquette books in nineteenth-century Western cultures, provides an overview of the early beginnings of advice literature on good manners with a clear distinction between conduct books and courtesy books (etiquette books appeared much later in the nineteenth century). According to her classification, courtesy books deal with the ideal courtier and his behaviour. A particularly prominent example is Baldassare Castiglione's book, *Il libro del cortegiano* 'The Book of the Courtier', published in 1528 and soon translated into English and many other European languages. Conduct books, on the other hand, address a broader audience which also includes townspeople, not just courtiers. Paternoster mentions Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo ovvero de' costume* (1558) as a pertinent example (see Culpeper 2017 on the reception of the *Galateo* in England). According to this distinction, the medical texts in MEMT are, of course, much closer to the conduct book tradition than to the courtesy book tradition. As pointed out above, they are addressed to a wide range of readers, including professionals and lay people, and indeed, Paternoster (2022: 39) links conduct books back to instructional literature in English going back to the thirteenth century.

The examples quoted above also provide a link to the use of the term *courtesy* in other Middle English texts, including fictional texts (Jucker 2020: Chapter 3). In these fictional texts, the term *curteisie* is used as a term to refer to a virtue or a praiseworthy moral ideal. It is used for aristocratic characters, but also with an ironic twist to members of the clergy or to lower class characters. In MEMT five examples of the term *curteis* (including spelling variants and other word forms) are attested, and they all occur in the context of advice giving.

7. Conclusion

The above survey of the uses of the meta-illocutionary expressions *rede* and *counsel* (and their spelling variants) in MEMT show the salience of these expressions in the context of Middle English advice-giving medical discourse. They were regularly used both to perform the speech act of advice giving and to talk about it. They are attested in 24 out of 172 source files of MEMT, but the

examples show that there is a great deal of variation in how they are used across the different medical texts.

From a diachronic perspective, *rede* becomes rarer in time while *counsel* takes over. This is perhaps not very surprising as it is the expression *counsel* that survives into later stages of the English language up to Present-Day English. *Rede* with the meaning of 'giving advice', on the other hand, is now archaic and restricted to poetic and literary uses (OED *rede* n.). It may also be significant that the chronological difference coincides with the traditions of medical writing: the native *rede* is more common in remedy books, which have a tradition going back to OE, while the surgical texts and the specialized texts of the more recent learned tradition favor *counsel.*

In the previous section, we have shown that advice giving in Middle English medical discourse goes beyond recommendations for healthy living and ways of restoring one's health. At least some of these texts also provide counsel for the medical profession on how to behave in their interactions with patients and members of their households. As such, they provide a fascinating picture not only into suggested treatments, but also into the discursive interactions in medical contexts.

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