

## Preface

AT THE CORE of this book is the contention that neither ideology nor behavior can be understood adequately except in relation to the other. To understand how nineteenth-century American physicians fashioned individual and collective identities, why they represented their knowledge and practices as they did, and how they transformed their professional world, we need to connect their rhetoric in medical journals, textbooks, and ceremonial orations with what they actually *did* at the bedside.

When I began writing this book at the start of the 1980s, a growing historical consensus encouraged this approach. Yet, in the history of medicine and science it was more often encountered in programmatic statements voiced around the seminar table than in the literature of the field. It has been satisfying, therefore, to have watched during the past decade as practice has moved to center stage in historical work. Just as historians of science have looked increasingly at the practice of experimentation, in part to move away from theory-dominated accounts of the construction of knowledge in the laboratory, so historians of medicine have turned their attention to the workaday acts of healing by physicians and other practitioners. The rise of the new cultural history has furthered this transformation in the attention of historians, in which the technical activities of medicine and science have joined other cultural practices such as appropriation, representation, the construction of identity, and the deployment of language as historiographic preoccupations.

As a graduate student in the late 1970s and early 1980s, at a moment when intellectual history was struggling to find a reconfigured, viable identity and when the new social history was in full ascendance, it was perhaps overdetermined that I was inclined to turn to cliometric analyses of previously unexplored records of everyday behavior. The pivotal sources I used in my reconstruction of nine-