

WELLCOME LIBRARY LEARNING RESOURCE



GCSE HISTORY MEDICINE THROUGH TIME TEACHERS' NOTES

What can the history of herbal cures tell us about the history of medicine?

One of the key concepts of the Medicine Through Time course is change and continuity. Yet often the course concentrates far more on examples of change than on examples of continuity. Herbal medicine is a good example of an approach to finding cures and palliatives that has been around as long as the human race. Source A, one of the oldest documents in the Wellcome Library's collections, is a herbal recipe (probably one of many) from before the Norman Conquest. Sources B and C are examples of collections of recipes for herbal cures – often jumbled up with more obvious cooking recipes. These collections were usually made by women, in these cases literate upper-class women – evidence of the continuing role of women as healers. Source D is from a modern herbal cure.

Task 1 helps students to get into the sources.

Task 2 leads students to find evidence of change within the long story of herbal approaches to medicine.

Task 3 leads students to select and deploy evidence from the sources to support various generalisations. This move from specific example to broader generalisation is an important part of this course. Students find it hard and benefit from the kind of practice this task provides.

WEBSITES

There are several sites that show the widespread use of herbal medicines today:

www.healthy.net/asp/templates/center.asp?centerid=24

www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/mgmh.html

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/herbalmedicine.html

A portrait of Lady Anne Fanshawe can be seen at:

www.npg.org.uk/live/search/portrait.asp?LinkID=mp50350&rNo=0&role=sit

Pictures of herbalists, historical and contemporary, and modern herbal medical treatments from around the world, can be seen at:

<http://www.wihm.nlm.nih.gov>

GENERAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE LINKS

History of Medicine information by period:

www.historylearningsite.co.uk/history_of_medicine.htm

Images:

http://www.wihm.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/gw_44_3/chameleon?skin.nlm

<http://medphoto.wellcome.ac.uk>

Gateway site:

<http://medhist.ac.uk>

Timeline:

www.schoolscience.co.uk/content/4/biology/abpi/history/timeline.html

www.schoolshistory.org.uk/medicine.htm