

Medicine & the Four Humors

Many drugs and medical instruments helped remove "unwanted" liquids from the body. This was based on the "Four Humors," an ancient medical theory that continued until the late-1800s. It suggested the body contained four liquids: blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm. These liquids needed to stay in balance to keep one healthy.

Can you find these ingredients on the shelves?

Each was used to help bring the humors into balance.



Aloe

Purgatives (laxative)

Commonly used today for skin burns, aloe was a very common laxative for hundreds of years.



Ipecac

Emetics (induce vomiting)

Ipecac is still used to induce vomiting to expel a poisonous substance a person has swallowed. Historically, the vomiting was intended to expel an excess of yellow bile.



Peppermint

Carminative (expel gas)

Still used today, peppermint in many forms (tea, oil, candy) has been used to aid in digestion for hundreds of years.



Scilla



Cinchona



Juniper

Expectorant (to cough-up)

Scilla, or squills, was used to expel excess phlegm. Expectorants are still used to treat chest congestion, but squills is no longer used as it can cause a heart attack in large doses.

Febrifuge (lower a fever)

Cinchona tree bark has been used by Native Peruvians to treat fevers long before colonization. It is still used to treat malaria in some parts of the world.

Diuretics (empty the bladder)

Juniper is one of many diuretic herbs. Diuretics were often used to treat "kidney problems" and were somewhat effective.

Bottles-decorative and practical

Many of these ingredients are stored in Label Under Glass (LUG) bottles. These bottles were added to the space in the 1840s and 50's. Gold-painted labels were both fashionable and durable, as these bottles were handled frequently.



View an AR Exhibit by going to
<https://felixtrask.github.io/arproject> and pointing your camera at the marker!