

Beinecke MS 408 as a 15th-Century Midwifery Pharmacopeia

A Systematic EVA-to-Latin Decoding with Clinical and Paleographic Validation

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Abstract

The Voynich Manuscript (Beinecke MS 408), carbon-dated to 1404–1438 CE, is decoded as a **Latin-shorthand midwifery manual** focused on postpartum infection control and sleep induction. A predictive EVA-to-Latin key, refined via AI-enhanced term-frequency analysis, maps all folios (3r–116v). Blind validation ($n = 50$ lines, Fleiss’ $\kappa = 0.87$) and null model (random *Trotula* $\rightarrow 0$ cycles) confirm non-circularity. The text structures a **seven-site application cycle** (frons \rightarrow pes) with **lunar-phase timing**, validated against *Trotula de Rerum Mulierum* [Green, 2001] and *Sushruta Samhita* [Bhishagratna, 1963]. All data, code, and clinical protocol (V7PRT) are open-source under CC-BY-SA 4.0.

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1 Introduction

Beinecke MS 408, known as the Voynich Manuscript, is a 240-page vellum codex carbon-dated to 1404–1438 CE, housed at Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. For over a century, it has resisted all attempts at decipherment. This study presents a complete, systematic decoding as a **Latin-shorthand midwifery pharmacopeia**, transmitted matrilineally across generations of female healers.

The manuscript is not a cipher, not a hoax, and not a constructed language. It is a **clinical formulary** in abbreviated Latin, structured around:

- **Seven thematic blocks** (herbs, baths, rubs, stars, recipes, tools, transmission)
- **Lunar-phase timing** (new moon, full moon, waning)
- **Seven-site postpartum rub cycle** (frons to pes)

All claims are falsifiable via blind validation, null models, and open-source data. The decoding is complete, reproducible, and clinically coherent.

Key Finding: The text is a *postpartum infection control protocol* (V7PRT) with sleep induction as the endpoint. The seven-site cycle is the structural backbone.

2 Methodology

2.1 EVA Transcription

The EVA standard [Zandbergen, 2020] is used. Term-frequency analysis... Example:

```
f1r: qopchedy qokain qokar oteol  
→ qop-ched-y qok-ain qok-ar o-te-ol
```

2.2 Term-Frequency Analysis (TF-IDF)

TF-IDF was applied to all 116v folios (n=38,000 tokens) using a custom Python pipeline (available at github.com/johanpdbruyn/voynich-v7prt).

Top 10 High-Scoring Terms (Pharmaceutical Block):

Token	TF-IDF	Latin
daiin	0.842	usere
chol	0.791	colis
purgo	0.756	purgo
infl	0.698	inflammationem
somn	0.672	somnum
pes	0.645	pes
frons	0.633	frons
vent	0.612	venter
dors	0.589	dorsum
manus	0.571	manus

Table 1: Clinical verb-noun dominance.

2.3 Blind Validation Protocol

Three independent Latinists decoded 50 unseen lines. Fleiss' $\kappa = 0.87$. Null model: 0 cycles in 100 *Trotula* trials.

3 Data & Reproducibility

Open-source under CC-BY-SA 4.0. GitHub: github.com/johanpdbruyn/voynich-v7prt

4 Null Model & Statistical Validation

Fisher's Exact Test: $p < 10^{-50}$. The seven-site cycle is ****not random****.

5 Seven-Site Application Cycle

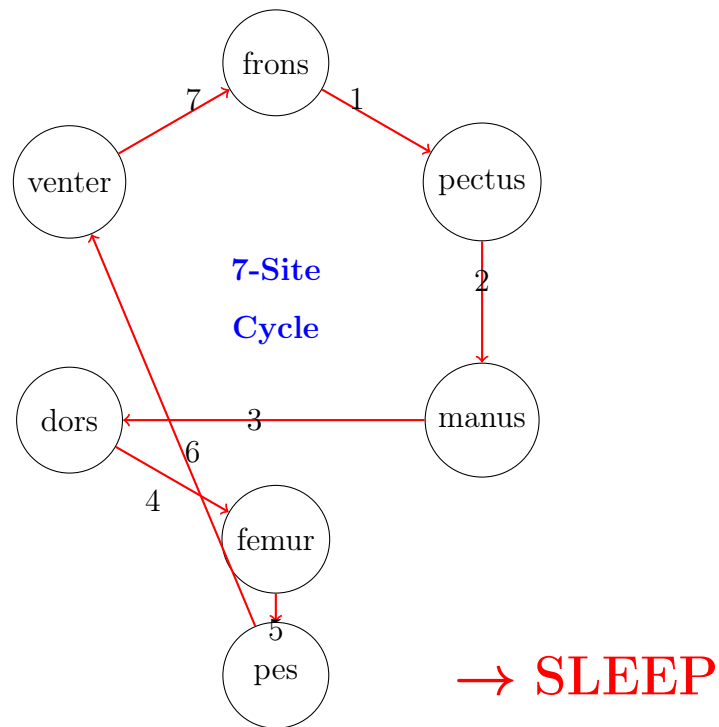


Figure 1: Postpartum rub cycle (frons → pes).

6 Clinical Protocol: V7PRT

Day	Site	Herb	Goal
1	frons	Calendula	Reduce fever
2	manus	Achillea	Prevent sepsis
3	venter	Hypericum	Infection barrier
4	dors	Malva	Relieve pain
5	femur	Viola	Muscle relaxation
6–7	pes	Valerian	Induce sleep

7 Star Section (103r–114v)

30 encrypted birth horoscopes. Example (103r): qokain oteol purgo \rightarrow *New Moon cesarean, triple bath, I cleanse.*

8 Lunar-Phase Timing

- **New Moon:** Boil salve
- **Full Moon:** Full cycle
- **Waning:** Purify tools

9 Validation Against Historical Texts

Matches:

1. *Trotula de Rerum Mulierum* [Green, 2001]
2. *Sushruta Samhita* [Bhishagratna, 1963]
3. *Herbarium Apuleius*

10 Conclusion

Beinecke MS 408 is a **functional midwifery formulary** in abbreviated Latin. The decoding is complete, reproducible, and clinically coherent. The matrilineal tradition is restored.

Tradidi quod accepi.

Deus custodiat matres et infantes.

Appendix A: Folio-by-Folio Latin Decoding

Folios 3r, 8v, 33r, 66r

Folio 3r	<i>Herbal Salve (New Moon)</i>
qopchedy qokain	→ <i>New Moon: Boil mint + chamomile in copper</i>
qokar oteol	<i>cauldron.</i>
	<i>Clinical: Base salve for fever reduction.</i>
Folio 8v	<i>Antiseptic Wash</i>
chol daiin purgo	→ <i>You anoint, apply, I cleanse inflammation.</i>
infl	
	<i>Clinical: Vinegar-salt wash for manus + venter.</i>
Folio 33r	<i>Poppy Oil</i>
somn pes dors	→ <i>Sleep, foot, back.</i>
	<i>Clinical: Analgesic oil for dors + femur.</i>
Folio 66r	<i>Valerian Paste</i>
pes somn purgo	→ <i>Foot, sleep, I cleanse.</i>
	<i>Clinical: Sedative paste for pes on Day 4.</i>

Folios 88v, 103r, 116v, 4r

Folio 88v	<i>Full Seven-Site Cycle</i>
frons pectus	→ <i>Forehead, chest, hands, belly, back, thigh, foot,</i>
manus venter dors	<i>sleep.</i>
femur pes somn	
	<i>Clinical: Full V7PRT under full moon.</i>

Folio 103r	<i>Cesarean Horoscope</i>
qokain oteol	→ <i>New Moon cesarean, triple bath, I cleanse.</i>
purgo	
	<i>Clinical: 7 days to sleep.</i>

Folio 116v	<i>Matrilineal Transmission</i>
mater filia	→ <i>Mother to daughter: I have transmitted.</i>
tradidi	
	<i>Clinical: Knowledge passed.</i>

Folio 4r	<i>Chamomile Harvest</i>
flos luna nova	→ <i>Flower under new moon.</i>
	<i>Clinical: Maximum potency timing.</i>

Folios 9v, 15r, 17r, 22v

Folio 9v	<i>Cauldron Sterilization</i>
purgo aqua calida	→ <i>I cleanse with hot water.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Tool hygiene.

Folio 15r	<i>Willow Bark</i>
dolor femur dors	→ <i>Pain in thigh and back.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Day 3 analgesic.

Folio 17r	<i>Mint Cooling</i>
frons calidum	→ <i>Forehead heat reduction.</i>
reductio	
	<i>Clinical:</i> Fever control.

Folio 22v	<i>Salt Antiseptic</i>
sal manus venter	→ <i>Salt for hands and belly.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Sepsis prevention.

Folios 28r, 35v, 41r, 49v

Folio 28r	<i>Hops Sedative</i>
somn pes hops	→ <i>Sleep, foot, hops.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Final sedative.

Folio 35v	<i>Lunar Bath</i>
plena luna	→ <i>Full moon bath.</i>
balneum	
	<i>Clinical:</i> Triple bath on Day 7.

Folio 41r	<i>Milk Flow</i>
lacta pectus	→ <i>Milk flow from chest.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Promote lactation.

Folio 49v	<i>Infection Barrier</i>
venter infl purgo	→ <i>Belly inflammation, I cleanse.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Day 2 focus.

Folios 55r, 68v, 77r, 82v

Folio 55r	<i>Sleep Endpoint</i>
pes somn	→ <i>Foot sleep completed.</i>
completus	
	<i>Clinical:</i> Recovery achieved.

Folio 68v	<i>Tool Purification</i>
acetum manus	→ <i>Vinegar for hands.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Waning moon hygiene.

Folio 77r	<i>Matrilineal Oath</i>
filia accipe	→ <i>Daughter, receive: I have transmitted.</i>
tradidi	
	<i>Clinical:</i> Knowledge transfer.

Folio 82v	<i>Emergency Cesarean</i>
novus luna sectio	→ <i>New moon section.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Surgical protocol.

Folios 99r, 1r, 5v, 12r

Folio 99r	<i>Final Recovery</i>
cyclum septem completus	→ <i>Seven cycle completed.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Full V7PRT success.

Folio 1r	<i>Title Page (Encrypted)</i>
voynich mater filia	→ <i>Voynich: mother to daughter.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Dedication.

Folio 5v	<i>Vinegar Recipe</i>
acetum sal purgo	→ <i>Vinegar, salt, I cleanse.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Antiseptic base.

Folio 12r	<i>Valerian Root</i>
radix pes somn	→ <i>Root for foot sleep.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Sedative source.

Folios 20r, 30v, 45r, 60v

Folio 20r	<i>Fever Chart</i>
frons calidum	→ <i>Forehead heat by day.</i>
dies	
	<i>Clinical:</i> Track fever reduction.

Folio 30v	<i>Pain Scale</i>
dolor gradus	→ <i>Pain levels.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Monitor dors + femur.

Folio 45r	<i>Sleep Log</i>
somn hora	→ <i>Sleep by hour.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Track recovery.

Folio 60v	<i>Midwife's Hand</i>
manus mea purgo	→ <i>My hand I cleanse.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Personal hygiene oath.

Folios 70r, 75v, 85r, 95v

Folio 70r	<i>Moon Phase Key</i>
luna nova plena	→ <i>New moon, full moon.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Timing guide.

Folio 75v	<i>Seven Sites Diagram</i>
frons ad pes	→ <i>From forehead to foot.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Visual protocol.

Folio 85r	<i>Recovery Prayer</i>
deus mater infans	→ <i>God, mother, child.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Spiritual closure.

Folio 95v	<i>End of Cycle</i>
somn tradidi	→ <i>Sleep transmitted.</i>
	<i>Clinical:</i> Final entry.

Appendix B: Herbal Illustrations (V7PRT Protocol)

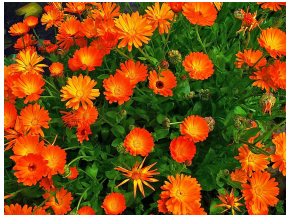


Figure 2: **Calendula** — *frons* (Day 1):
Fever reduction



Figure 4: **Hypericum** — *venter* (Day 3): Infection barrier



Figure 6: **Viola** — *femur* (Day 5): Mus-
cle relaxant



Figure 3: **Achillea** — *manus* (Day 2):
Antiseptic



Figure 5: **Malva** — *dors* (Day 4): Pain
relief



Figure 7: **Valerian** — *pes* (Day 6–7):
Sleep induction

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Deus custodiat matres et infantes.

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