REMEDIES DURING THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

VERONICA BENITEZ
INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CHOLERA?

As a major global health problem, cholera put the lives of many people in jeopardy. Without treatment, this 20th century deadly disease had the potential of becoming fatal. Symptoms include excessive diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration. Being that Gabriel Furman (1800-1854) himself became a victim, he found himself open to efficient treatments in which consisted of opium. In the journal entries of Gabriel Furman began, one will be able to see how his intake of this stimulant which changed his life rather drastically. The ambitious, responsible man people once knew, had slowly begun to disappear and neglect his duties. It is not so much the drug itself that put a risk to his life, but the regulation in which it was being used.
HISTORY OF OPIUM

• DISCOVERED IN 1660S BY THOMAS SYDENHAM (1624-1689)
• BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT HE PUBLISHED “MEDICAL OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE HISTORY AND CURE OF ACUTE DISEASES”, PEOPLE BEGAN USING OPIUM FOR A RANGE OF MEDICAL REASONS AND CONDITIONS.
• BY 1820, OPIUM WAS MIXED WITH EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE IN ORDER TO FIND THE MOST EFFICIENT CURE FOR SUCH A DEADLY DISEASE.
• WHEN CHOLERA HIT BROOKLYN, NY IN 1832, OPIUM WAS EXPECTED TO CURE THIS PESTILENCE, HOWEVER, IT ENDED UP PUTTING MANY LIVES IN JEOPARDY AND SUDDEN DEATHS.
• IN THE YEAR OF 1905, OPIUM WAS BANNED FROM THE U.S

Grieve, Maud. “Opium Poppy”. Botanical: Papaver somniferum (LINN.)
The New York Sun, newspaper of yesterday, gives the following as its remedy for the chills of the duxes, of which it speaks in the most confident terms.

"Tincture Opium."  
"Cayenne Pepper, treble strength."
"Rhubarb."

Essence of Peppermint, treble strength.  
Spirits of Camphor.

The dose is from 15 to 30 and even 60 drops, according to age, and violence of symptoms, and every 15 to 30 minutes until relief."  

But strange to say, no rule is given as to quantities by which to make this compound.
TINCTURE OPIUM

• CAYENNE PEPPER
A powerful stimulant in which appeared to be effective in the stomach and intestines preventing diseases such as Cholera.

• RHUBARB
Acting as a mild purgative/laxative, Rhubarb allows the body to loosen the bowels and release any internal toxins.

• ESSENCE OF PEPPERMINT
Peppermint oil helps ease sudden abdominal pains or cramps, while also preventing nausea.

• SPIRITS OF CAMPHOR
Because of its cold, bitter taste, Camphor numbs the peripheral sensory nerves. Effective for a calming influence on diarrhea.
Calcutta Remedy

The following is called the "Calcutta Remedy," from the fact of it having very extensively been used in that place: it has probably been more generally used than any other single prescription. It is taken at a single draught, and seldom fails of affording instant relief to the patient — viz: —

One ounce of Cinnamon Water, Fifty drops of Laudrum, One drachm of Spirits of Lavender, and two drachms of the Tincture of Rhubarb.

A correspondent in the Calcutta Journal for May 1820, asserts, that he has obtained the happiest effects from the use of the Voltaic Pile, in cases of invertebrate.
CALCUTTA REMEDY

• 1 OUNCE OF CINNAMON AND WATER
Cinnamon alone is prescribed as a powder, but when combined with water and other medicines, it stops vomiting and flatulence.

• 50 DROPS OF LAUDANUM (OPIUM)
As a tincture of opium, it is most valuable for its effects of relieving pain and/or excitement. However, the intentional use for this in the 20th century was for astringent purposes, such as diarrhea.

• ONE DRACHM OF SPIRITS OF LAVENDER
Made from the essential oil, the spirits of lavender acts as a restoration drug against faintness, weakness or even spasms.

• 2 DRACHMS OF TINCTURE OF RHUBARB
As an alcoholic extract, tincture of rhubarb comforts the stomach, acting as a cleanser.
REGULATION OF OPIUM: NOW AND THEN

In retrospect, we can clarify the fact that there has been a growth in knowledge and technology. Due to excessive indulgence of opium during the cholera epidemic, what was intended to be a treatment, only put lives in jeopardy. Excessive indulgence has led victims not only to a physical and psychological craving of the drug, but death as well. 100-150 mg of morphine (found in opium) is equivalent to 2-3 teaspoons of opium tincture. This is considered to be overdose, allowing one to die quickly from asphyxiation. Because of these dangerous side effects, opium has become restricted in the U.S.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


• Grieve, Maud. “Rhubarbs”. Botanical. 1995

• Remedies For, volume 7, 102; Gabriel Furman papers, ARC. 190, box 2, folder 3; Brooklyn Historical Society

• Lengthy report of how he heard about a major fire in NY, 1835, miscellanies, 37; Gabriel Furman papers, ARC.190, box 7, folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society