Prescriptions: "Fifty Years in The Past, And Those of Today, A Comparison."

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ABSTRACT

More than one hundred prescription files dating from 1916 to 1939 were discovered in the basement of the old Creighton University Pharmacy and Medical Schools previously located at 14th & Davenport Streets in Omaha, Nebraska. An analysis of a group of these prescriptions written in the years 1918 and 1919 was made. Special emphasis has been placed on ingredients, manner in which prescriptions were written, special dose forms, and pharmaceutical processing. The prescriptions written fifty years ago were compared to those written today, and observations were made relating to the comparison.

The Creighton University Medical and Pharmacy Schools were located at 14th & Davenport Streets in Omaha, Nebraska from 1907 until the summer of 1969, when the Pharmacy School was moved to the main campus. During this move, a large number of old prescription files were found in the cellar of the old building. The files were dated from 1917 to 1939. In all there were over one hundred of these old prescription files. The author, who is a member of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, was responsible for moving these files to the present Pharmacy School on the main campus of Creighton University. In addition to the old prescription files, a large book in which prescriptions were filed from 4-1-18 to 1-31-19 was also discovered.

An examination of the prescriptions filed over fifty years ago demonstrates dramatically how medication has changed. It is apparent to one who studies these files that the Pharmacist of fifty years ago had to be well versed in the art of Pharmacy. Practically all of the prescriptions required the Pharmacist to apply his skill in creating unique dose forms. The prescriptions also are valuable in that they demonstrate the many great advances in the medicinals of today, as these are almost completely missing from the medicinal inventory of just fifty years ago.

The author has picked out 100 items at random from the files dated in 1918 and 1919, and beside it is a list of 100 items from prescription files of 1969. The reader will observe the tremendous differences in the items.

The medicinals used in the prescriptions dated 1918-19 were taken at random from the book of prescriptions previously mentioned. Although the one hundred items is a cross section of materials used in those days, it is not a complete list. The materials included in the medicinals from prescriptions of 1969 were taken from a list of 200 leading drugs prescribed in 1968.

Several observations may be made to compare the prescriptions of today with those written fifty years ago. The prescriptions written fifty years ago
Medicinals from 1918-1919 Prescriptions

1. Mild Mercurous Chloride Tablets
2. Strychnine Sulfate
3. Extract Cannabis Indica
4. Ammonium Carbonate
5. Saccharated Pepsin
6. Anise Water
7. Bismuth Subnitrate
8. Tincture Opium Camphorated
9. Essence of Pepsin
10. Camphor
11. Oil of Eucalyptus
12. Guiacol
13. Pine Needle Oil
14. Lanolin
15. Neuronidia
16. Aromatic Elixir
17. Iron and Maganese
18. Phenacetin
19. Salol
20. Caffeine
21. Acetanilid
22. Quinine Sulfate
23. Powder Extract Belladonna
24. Tincture Hyoscyamus
25. Syrup Tolu
26. Tincture Aconite
27. Cinnamon Water
28. Elixir Lactopeptine
29. Bashams Mixture
30. Potassium Iodide
31. Syrup Ferrous Iodide
32. Adrenalin Inhalant
33. Calcreose
34. Veracolate Pills
35. Syrup of Ipecac
36. Elixir of Heroin and Terpin Hydrate
37. Hypophosphites Syrup
38. Syrup of Senega
39. Squill Syrup
40. Tincture of Nux Vomica
41. Tincture Cardamon Compound
42. Tincture Cinchona Compound
43. Blauds Mass
44. Icthyol
45. Elixir Lactated Pepsin
46. Wampoles Creo Terpin
47. Fluidextract of Ergot
48. Ergot Extract
49. Cascara Sagrada Evacuant
50. Elixir Iron Quinine and Strychnine
51. Liquor Aluminum Actate
52. Sarsaparilla Compound
53. Potassium Arsenite
54. Orange Syrup
55. Digitalis Infusion
56. Peptomangan
57. Powdered Alum
58. Zinc Stearate
59. Februline
60. Red Iodide of Mercury
61. Syrup Stillingia Compound
62. Fluid Extract Hydrastis
63. Rhubarb Extract
64. Podophyllum
65. Mercury Cyanide
66. Creosote
67. Strontium Bromide
68. Mass of Mercury
69. Fowlers Solution
70. Elixir Buchu, Juniper and Potassium Acetate
71. Iron Citrate Solution
72. Iron Pyrophosphate
73. Cascara Compound Pills
74. Aromatic Spirits of Ammonia
75. Digitalis Extract
76. Potassium Citrate
77. Glyco-Thymoline
78. Aconite Tincture
79. Veronal Capsules
80. Eucalyptol
81. Mixed Treatment Pill No. 1
Medicinals from 1969 Prescriptions

1. Achromycin
2. Aldactazide
3. Antivert
4. Ampicillin
5. Artane
6. Atarax
7. Azo-Gantrisin
8. Benadryl
9. Biphetamine
10. Butazolidin
11. Chlor Trimeton
12. Compazine
13. Coumadin
14. Crystodigin
15. Cytomel
16. Darvon
17. Decadron
18. Declomycin
19. Dexamyl
20. Digoxin
21. Dilantin Sodium
22. Diabinese
23. Dimetane
24. Doriden
25. Dramamine
26. Diuril
27. Donnatal
28. Dyazide
29. Elavil
30. Enovid
31. Equanil
32. Erythromycin
33. Esidrix
34. Eskatrol
35. Feosol
36. Fiorinal
37. Furadantin
38. Gantanol
39. Gantrisin
40. Hydrodiuril
41. Hygroton
42. Ilosone
43. Indocin
44. Isodril
45. Isuprel Mistometer
46. Kenalog
47. Lanoxin
48. Lasix
49. Librax
50. Librium
51. Lomotil
52. Maalox
53. Mandelamine
54. Medrol
55. Mellaril
56. Meprobamate
57. Mycolog
58. Mycostatin
59. Mylanta
60. Mysteclin-F
61. Naldecon
62. Nembutal
63. Neosporin
64. Nitroglycerin
required a great deal of compounding on the part of the pharmacist. He was required to prepare capsules, powders, pills, gargles, ointments, masses, and liquid preparations of all types. With few exceptions each prescription required an artful preparation. The prescriptions of fifty years ago contained several (usually three to five or more) ingredients. On examination of the list of materials used fifty years ago, they are distinctly more inorganic in chemical nature than organic. Many materials were obtained from natural sources (plants), and consisted of extracts rather than single materials. The preponderance of flavored waters, syrups, and essences is also apparent. Although trade name products did exist and were prescribed, numerically, these were not as prominent as the Trade Marked medicinals of today. The shotgun aspect of treating disease is also apparent from the prescriptions, as the physicians would use up to six or seven ingredients in the same prescription. The prescriptions written fifty years ago were written in Latin and in the apothecary system of weights and measures. The medicinals missing from the prescriptions of fifty years ago are quite apparent when examining the files. Not one of the items listed in the 1969 medicinals can be found in the 1918-19 files. Antibiotics, tranquilizers, oral hypoglycemic agents, antineoplastic agents, thiazide diuretics, oral contraceptives, anti-inflammatory steroids, oral sustained action medications, insulin, and others are notably absent.
The prescriptions of 1969 consist of synthetics to a much larger extent than the fifty year old medicinals. Extracts have been evaluated and single potent materials are now available (digitoxin). The medicinals of today are overwhelmingly organic in nature. The number of trademarked medicinals is extremely large, and duplications of products exist. Several of the medicinals used fifty years ago are still used but are generally incorporated in prefabricated products.

Writing of prescriptions in Latin has almost completely disappeared and the metric system of weights and measures is used today. The pharmacist of today still must compound many prescriptions, but the art has been transferred to the pharmaceutical manufacturers who produce medicinals on a large scale. The responsibility of the pharmacist has increased as the new number of medicinals has increased. Potency of the newer materials is greater, and the possibilities of drug interactions is great.

The prescription files obtained from the old Creighton Pharmacy School are open to inspection by interested parties. Several types of studies and comparison could be made from scholarly investigation. The author hopes that this article will stimulate this kind of interest.