

DRINKS WITH DEAD PEOPLE

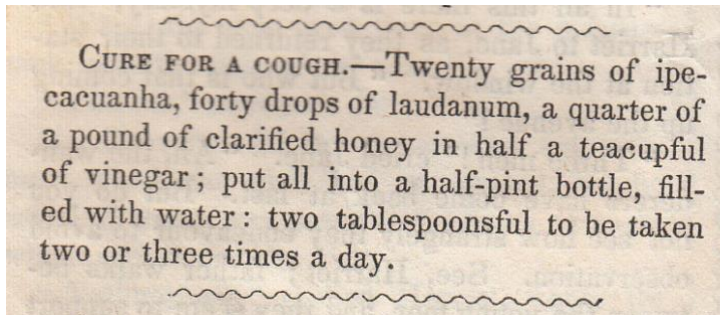
QUARANTINE EDITION

MARCH 23, 2020: VICTORIAN COUGH SYRUP

Don't believe the Internet about how to gin up some DIY coronavirus remedies. And for that matter: don't believe this historical remedy, either.

THE STORY

You may have heard a lot of recommendations on the Internet lately about how to deal with coronavirus: everything from holding your breath for ten seconds to honey to hair dryers has been recommended in the more dubious corners of the Internet. History is no stranger to odd medical recommendations, as we can see from this 1842 clipping from the *New-York Visitor and Lady's Album*:



The modern approach to clinical trials and rigorous drug testing is largely a 20th century American invention, as (1) medicine reckoned with medical therapies during the war years and beyond (chemotherapy, for example, is an [outgrowth of the WWII era](#)), and (2) [legislation](#) like the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938 built some lasting authority.

Before that time, medical treatments were largely unregulated and based on anyone's then-best guess as to what ingredients might be most therapeutic. The "patent medicines" popular in the 19th century relied on a mind-altering range of stock ingredients typically including things like cocaine, alcohol or opiates (the laudanum above? That's opium dissolved in alcohol.).

Read on [at the blog](#) for more detail and resources.

DISCUSS:

How do you decide if a drug, supplement or therapy is credible?
Are patent medicines similar or unlike modern alternative supplements?
(That is: do you believe the FDA more than [Gwyneth Paltrow](#)? What happens when alt-remedies [work](#)?)
What are the pros and cons of lengthy drug testing protocols?
What disclaimers should be required?

Hi, I'm Betsy. Stuck at home? Let's learn history together, because the past helps us to understand that we are not alone. Weekday updates during #COVID19.

Questions? Comments? Say hello.

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