

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

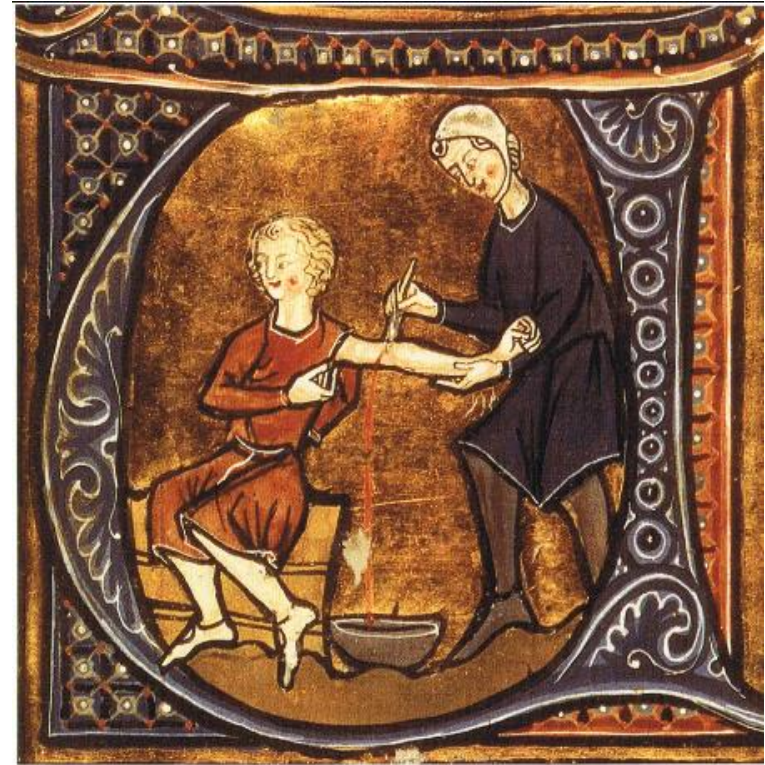
## ILLNESS, HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Medicine against sickness was a necessity in the Middle Ages, as it is today. However, they did not understand a lot about medicine, although people were writing about medicine in Welsh from the 1300's.

Epidemic diseases were still common, like the plague, through to the 1400's.

For medicines people used natural things such as vegetables, herbs, precious stones and even the moon, stars and planets. Religion was also important, as shown in Welsh poems about healing.

When we are ill, we visit the GP; they went to the Apothecary. Apothecaries healed people with herbs, and medicine that they prepared and gave general medical advice and services.



Physician letting blood from a patient. Attributed to Aldobrandino of Siena:  
Li Livres dou Santé. France, late 13th Century / British Library, Creative Commons

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Illumination from a copy of *Li livres dou santé* by Aldobrandino of Siena .  
British Library manuscript Sloane 2435, f. 44v.

These medieval doctors, always men, followed the ideas of Greek and Roman doctors, Hippocrates and Galen.

Hippocrates believed in the idea of the *four humours*. This was the idea that the human body was made up of four substances: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile.

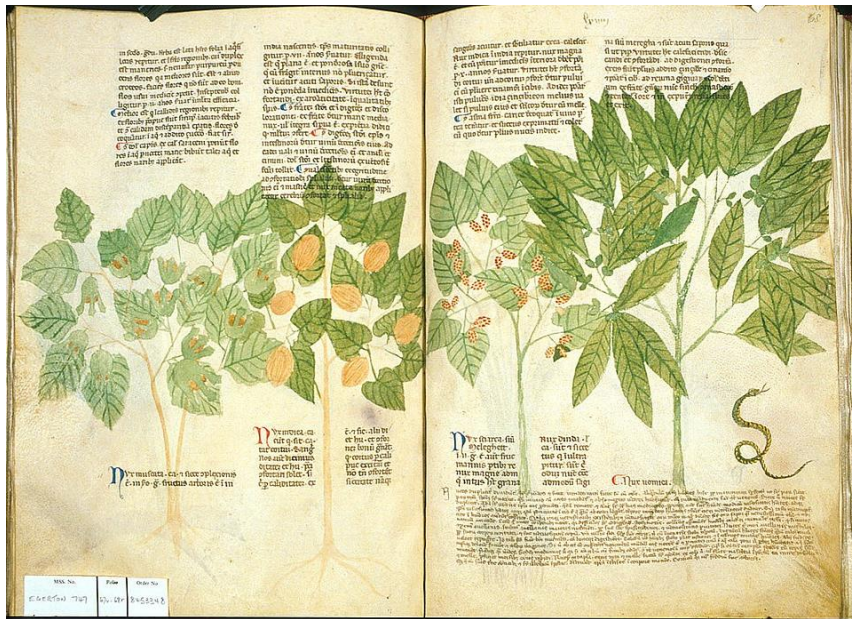
If you were ill, doctors thought that it was because your humours were out of balance. So, if someone has a cold, they have a runny nose, and Galen said that this was the body's way of getting rid of too much phlegm. They also thought that the humours were linked to the seasons.

When doctors gave treatments, they were attempting to get the body to do what it was trying to do itself. For example, Galen said that nosebleeds were the body's way of getting rid of too much blood.

These ideas and treatments were used until the 19th century.



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Bartholomaeus Mini de Senis, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treatise\\_on\\_Herbs#/media/File:BL\\_Egerton\\_747\\_f.067v-068r.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treatise_on_Herbs#/media/File:BL_Egerton_747_f.067v-068r.jpg)

They used herbs and plants to treat illness. Herbs used most often were Elderberry, Wild Sage, Rosehips, Plantain, Calendula, Comfrey, Yarrow, Nettle, and many others. They used these herbs to treat common colds and minor injuries.

Welsh poems of the time refer to saints, holy ointments and healing springs, all traditional cures to treat wounds and prevent diseases.

Monks would also give people medicine, and look after them in the abbeys. When people went to the Crusades, they brought back new medicines and treatments from Jerusalem: Christians to care for others in hospitals, poor houses, hostels, and orphanages, to try to help those most in need.



Entries for chamomile and 'hart clover', from an illustrated Old English Herbal, England (? Christ Church Canterbury or Winchester), c. 1000–1025, [Cotton MS Vitellius C III, f. 29v](#)

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The doctor is treating a wound on a man's leg, and the lady is preparing an ointment from plants

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/disciplines/english/lion/medicine.shtml>

As there were a lot of wars at that time, the doctors knew how to treat someone with a wound. They knew how to set broken bones in plaster and how to seal wounds using egg whites or old wine, to stop them getting infected.

And they knew how to use alcohol, or plants like mandragora, to send people to sleep or stop pain.

They could even do operations, like taking out a gall-bladder, or delivering a baby by Caesarean section.

Text adapted from:

<https://historymedieval.com/herbal-medicine-in-the-middle-ages/>  
<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/kill-or-cure-10-medieval-medical-practices-and-their-effectiveness/>  
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<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/disciplines/english/lion/index.shtml>