



HerbClip™

Shari Henson
Heather S Oliff, PhD
Densie Webb, PhD

Brenda Milot, ELS
Marissa Oppel, MS

John Neustadt, ND
Cathleen Rapp, ND

Executive Editor – Mark Blumenthal *Consulting Editors* – Dennis Awang, PhD, Steven Foster, Roberta Lee, MD

Managing Editor – Lori Glenn

Funding/Administration – Wayne Silverman, PhD *Production* – George Solis/Kathleen Coyne

FILE: ■ Herb Use - Pediatrics
■ Eclectic Physicians
■ Childhood Ailments

HC 020552-284

Date: July 15, 2005

RE: Historical Perspective of Botanicals Used by Eclectic Physicians in Pediatrics

Winston D. The use of botanicals in Eclectic pediatrics. *J Am Herbalists Guild*.
Spring/Summer 2004:59-64.

Eclectic physicians practiced medicine in America in the 19th century. They relied upon herbal medicines and natural remedies to treat disease. Medical specialists were rare at that time, and Eclectic physicians treated both children and adults. The purpose of this article was to review Eclectic medical remedies for six common childhood ailments.

Otitis media is an inflammation and infection of the middle ear. Eclectics recommended dry heat to relieve the pain. External remedies included warm tobacco smoke blown into the ear and fermented liquid from mullein flowers (*Verbascum thapsus*) applied to the ear several times a day. Internal remedies to relieve pain and congestion included tinctures of aconite root (*Aconitum napellus*), pulsatilla herb (*Pulsatilla* spp.), spikenard root (*Aralia racemosa*), and gelsemium root (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) and tea made from chamomile flowers (*Matricaria recutita*). With the exception of chamomile and spikenard root, the other herbs are considered toxic and were administered in relatively well-defined preparations in highly controlled dosages.

In the 1800s, teething pain was often treated by lancing the gums or giving opium to the infant. Tinctures of gelsemium root, yellow sweetclover herb (*Melilotus officinalis*), and skullcap herb (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) and chamomile tea were given to relieve pain and irritability.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a respiratory infection that causes coughing spasms with a characteristic "whooping" sound in children. Eclectics treated children with whooping cough by using tinctures of ipecac root (*Cephaelis ipecacuanha*), American chestnut leaf (*Castanea dentata*), sundew herb (*Drosera* spp.), gelsemium root, grindelia herb (*Grindelia* spp.), elecampane root (*Inula helenium*), lobelia herb and seed (*Lobelia inflata*), and tea made from red clover blossom (*Trifolium pratense*).

Eclectics used cold baths, hot baths, alkaline sponge baths, and acid/vinegar baths to treat children with high fevers. Internal remedies included tinctures or teas from yarrow herb and flowers (*Achillea millefolium*), aconite root, pleurisy root (*Asclepias tuberosa*), belladonna herb (*Atropa belladonna*), wild indigo root (*Baptisia tinctoria*), black cohosh root (*Actaea racemosa* syn. *Cimicifuga racemosa*), boneset flowering herb (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), and American hellebore root (*Veratrum viride*).

Croup is an infection of the larynx that causes a "barking" cough. Eclectics treated children with croup with tinctures or juice from aconite root, ipecac root, lobelia herb and seed, pokeberry (*Phytolacca americana*), Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*), bloodroot root (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), and stillingia root (*Stillingia sylvatica*).

Colds and sore throats were just as common when Eclectics practiced as they are today. The Eclectic herbal remedies had antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and immune stimulating properties. The remedies included tinctures or teas from spikenard root, Jack-in-the-pulpit (a.k.a. Indian turnip; *Arisaema triphyllum*), pleurisy root, boneset herb, gelsemium root, chamomile flowers, horsemint herb (*Monarda punctata*), catnip herb (*Nepeta cataria*), wild marjoram herb (*Origanum vulgare*), pokeroot (*Phytolacca americana*), and bittersweet nightshade twigs (*Solanum dulcamara*).

The author notes that aconite, belladonna, bittersweet nightshade, American hellebore, gelsemium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and poke berry and root are no longer recommended for use in children because of potential toxicity. While the article provides preparation and dosage information for the remedies, readers are cautioned that this information is provided for historical purpose, not prescriptive purposes.

—Heather S. Oliff, PhD

Enclosure: Referenced article reprinted with permission from the American Herbalists Guild.

The American Botanical Council provides this review as an educational service. By providing this service, ABC does not warrant that the data is accurate and correct, nor does distribution of the article constitute any endorsement of the information contained or of the views of the authors.

ABC does not authorize the copying or use of the original articles. Reproduction of the reviews is allowed on a limited basis for students, colleagues, employees and/or members. Other uses and distribution require prior approval from ABC.