

MEDICINES, APOTHECARIES AND SOCIETY IN LATIN COUNTRIES

Lafont O.

Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie de Rouen, 22 boulevard Gambetta, 76183, Rouen cedex1, France.

Medicines are not goods like the others. They have an ambiguous behaviour: They can be the best as well as the worst. This is expressed by the ambiguous signification of the Greek word jarmakon which means both medicine and poison. In Latin countries, this specificity has always been highly perceived by the Society. Immediately after the rising of a kind of people specialised in the preparation and the distribution of drugs and medicines, the apothecaries, their professional practice has been controlled by the authorities. The first example of these regulations is constituted by what were called The constitutions of Melfi. Friedrich the second was both emperor of German Roman Empire and king of Sicily. He published the famous Liber Augustalis in Melfi, in 1231. It contained the first regulations concerning apothecaries. Ten years later, were published the New constitutions of Melfi. This body of laws constituted the basis, which inspired all the regulations that were published later on, in Latin countries. Three main institutions ruled the practice of apothecaries: an official pharmacopoeia, inspections of shops, and the existence of examinations. To these regulations, was linked the monopoly of making and distributing drugs and medicines, attributed to apothecaries. The roles of medicine doctors and of apothecaries were strictly delimited.