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THE SISTER-PHARMACISTS OF THE SAINT-JOHN'S HOSPITAL IN BRUGES: HOW PHARMACEUTICAL SKILLS AND REMEDIES WERE ACQUIRED AND PASSED ON TO NEXT GENERATIONS

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Musea Brugge – Memling in Sint-Jan Hospitaalmuseum, Dijver 12, 8000 Brugge, Belgium

The St-John's Hospital in Bruges was founded around 1150. Sisters and brothers ran the medieval hospital together till end of the 16th century. When the brother cloister was left empty, the city magistrate decided to found a historic pharmacy in 1643. This hospital pharmacy remained in use until 1971. The furnishings date largely from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The historic pharmacy, complete with dispensing-table, shelves containing pharmacists' jars and other receptacles, mortars, plaster-chest, poison-chest and simplicia cabinet, has been fully preserved together with its own original atmosphere.

Sister-pharmacists ran the pharmacy. Some of them are depicted in the paintings here. Soon after the pharmacy had been established, they were instructed by a pharmacist from Bruges. After that, the sisters run the pharmacy on their own, using different methods to pass on their skills and knowledge. The female pharmacists got knowledge from Dodoens' Cruydt-Boeck, which was bought especially for them in 1643. They also found prescriptions in the pharmacopoeias and books that contained home-remedies.

This lecture will give you an idea of the different resources they used which have been preserved till this day in the pharmacy.