

## Ségnat's Antidote for Modern Living

This name may be confusing to those to take the word “antidote” to mean what it does modernly. Modernly we have arrived at a reductionistic definition of the word “toxin” that leads some historians to take the word out of context and surmise that the ancient Greeks were fixated with the idea of being poisoned but that is not the case. The Greek word *antidotan* simply meant “given against” and was used to refer to many remedies. The Middle English word *antidotarie* was still being used in the 1400's to describe manuscripts written on medicinal agents.

Galen made both specific antidotes such as his “Antidote for Back Pain” and broadly effective preparations. An example would be “Antidote for Diverse Diseases.” Paulus Aeginita often recommended a tonic he called “Antidote of Seven Things” and recommended purging with the Mithridatic antidote for those suffering from ulcerous or malignant cancers.<sup>1</sup>

Segnat's preparation is an electuary. In its simplest form an electuary is ground herbal powders with enough honey stirred in to make a thick paste that can be taken by the spoonful. They were probably first used by the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, but we don't have solid documentation of the types of formulas used until the Greeks. Electuaries were very popular in Muslim countries due to the prohibition on alcohol which meant that they did not use wine to decoct medicinal preparations and so many formulas for these preparations were saved via the Andalusians at Cordoba and Ibn Sīnā.

This formula is put together with three therapeutic goals:

The first goal of this formula is to support digestion or the “transmutation of the nutriment into the proper quality of the thing receiving it”<sup>2</sup> which Galen believed resulted from the innate heat. Core heat must be sufficient in order to break down foodstuffs and toxins so they can be properly digested, metabolized, and eliminated. This requires kindling a core heat and helping it move to the periphery, which I have tried to balance for modern bodies.

The second goal is to support the organ systems by reducing chronic inflammation which is strongly addressed by the resins used. Frankincense is included in this formula for reducing chronic inflammation- but I am specifically interested in the new research surrounding its impact on cerebral edema.

The third goal is to contribute a broad array of phytochemicals known to induce detoxification enzymes such as mustard. These phytochemicals will assist the body in processing the overload of toxins in the modern environment. So truly it is an antidote in this sense.

Each of the following herbs were documented in herbals published before 1600 CE and were widely traded enough to be available to my persona.

## The Formula

### 2-parts mustard powder

Mustard powder was often mentioned as an agent that “neutralized the dangers” of cold foods especially meat. Brunschwig wrote that mustard flowers and seeds were “of a warme complexion and cause him that is colde of complexion to sweate lightly.”<sup>3</sup>

### 1-part mastic powder

This powdered resin is a traditional tonic for the stomach and digestive system likely due to its aromatic bitter properties. It became reduced to an aperient and went out of use. But many medieval formulas included a small amount which is likely to encourage regular healthy digestive function.

### 1-part Boswellia powder

Dioscorides wrote this resin was “effective mixed with medicines made for the arteries and bowels.”<sup>4</sup>

### 1-part myrrh powder

Myrrh was included in powder formulas in medieval times for situations where there might be internal heat but cold periphery.<sup>5</sup> It acts as a warming central circulatory stimulant that is not quite as drying as cayenne.

### 1-part true cinnamon

The French physician Prevost was noted for including cinnamon in many of his formulas including his *Aromatica* which was said to “fortifieth the stomacke, the liuer, and the principall members...”<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this formula, it is useful in stimulating and chasing energy to the periphery to be vented outwards.

### 1 -part galangal

Galangal was a popular digestive herb. It is stimulating like ginger but less drying. Newton wrote the root was “good for the stomacke & consumeth cold humors in the same.”<sup>7</sup> Interestingly he also speaks of galangal frequently being adulterated by the Roote of Acorus.

### 1-part gentian

Another traditional bitter, gentian is good for stimulating assimilation by its actions on the liver. Dodoens wrote that the powder taken by the dram with water aided digestion and was “very good agaynst all colde diseases of the interior or inner partes.”<sup>8</sup>

### 1-part grains of paradise (*Aframomum melegueta*)

These seeds have a sharp pepper-like taste and stimulatory action, but are more hot and moist<sup>9</sup> than drying.

Notes for those trying this at home...

This formula is made to accompany a typical medieval diet heavy in grains and saturated fats which is not so very different than our own modern diet. Medieval physicians had methods of countering the detrimental effects of such a diet. The formula is far too heating and drying for someone on a low-fat or vegetarian regime and would need to be mixed with ghee or some other saturated fat to counter that.

Because of the warming nature of this formula, people attempting it must maintain adequate levels of hydration. The body needs the fluids to help counter the heat and flush out xenobiotics.

YIS,

Ségnat ingen Fháeláin, Shire of Shadowdale, Kingdom of Calontir

### ~~Period Reference~~

<sup>1</sup> Aegineta, Paulus, Paulus. *Medical Compendium in Seven Books*. Translated by Adams, Francis. 1847 Translation. Vol. II. London, England: Sydenham Soc., 600. Book IV pp 84.

<sup>2</sup> Galen. *On the Natural Faculties*. Translated by Brock, Arthur John. 1916 translation. London, England: William Heinemann, 160.

<sup>3</sup> Brunschwig, Hieronymus. *A Most Excellent and Perfecte Homish Apothecarye or Homely Physik Booke, for All the Grefes and Diseases of the Bodye. Translated out the Almaine Speche into English by Ihon Hollybush*. Translated by Hollybush, Ihon. Imprinted at Collen: By [the heirs of] Arnold Birckman, in the year of our Lord M.D.LXI. [1561], 1561.

<sup>4</sup> Dioscorides. *De Materia Medica. - Five Books in One Volume: A New English Translation*. Translated by Osbaldeston, T. Vol. Book One Aromatics. Johannesburg: IBIDIS Press, ca. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Aegineta, Paulus, Paulus. *Medical Compendium in Seven Books*. Translated by Adams, Francis. 1847 Translation. Vol. I. London, England: Sydenham Soc., 600.

<sup>6</sup> Prévost, Nicole, 15th cent. *Prepositas His Practise a Vvorke Very Necessary to Be Vsed for the Better Preseruatiō of the Health of Man. ... Translated out of Latin into English by L.M.* Edited by Nicolaus Myrepsus 13th cent. Translated by Leonard Mascall d. Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 437:08. London: Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe for Edward White, dwelling at the little north doore of Paules, at the signe of the Gunne, 1588., 1588.

<sup>7</sup> Newton, Thomas, 1542? *Approved Medicines and Cordiall Receiptes with the Natures, Qualities, and Operations of Sundry Samples. Very Commodious and Expedient for All That Are Studious of Such Knowledge*. Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 896:07. Imprinted at London : In Fleete-streete by Thomas Marshe, 1580., 1580. pp 45.

<sup>8</sup> Dodoens, Rembert. *A Nieuwe Herball, or Historie of Plantes*. Translated by Henry Lyte. 1578 Translation. Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 289:01. London, England: AT LONDON by my Gerard Dewes, dwelling in Pawles Churchyarde at the signe of the Swanne, 1554.

<sup>9</sup> Russel, Iohn. "The Boke of Nurture." Harleian MS 4011. British Museum Translated by Furnivall, Frederick. London, England, ca 1465.