

Drug store drugstore and pharmacy history

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RUNNING HEADER: The Dangers of Patent Medicine The Dangers of Patent Medicine BY YOU YOUR SCHOOL INFO HERE HERE The Dangers of Patent Medicine During the 1800s, it was common for various elixirs, potions, and herbal remedies to be sold to mass market consumers which contained formulas and ingredients that posed significant long-term health risks. It was not until 1907 that the government began to regulate these remedies, also referred to as patent medicine, as the scientific and research communities were coming to realize that such elixirs were not living up to their advertising promises. In fact, many varieties of patent medicine formulas contained opium, alcohol, and even cocaine, which led to long-term drug addiction with many different consumer demographics. One such elixir was labeled “Soothing Baby Syrup” designed to be a deterrent for the crying baby (Drugstore Museum, 2004). This formula actually met up with its promises, however the baby would become addicted to opium which was the main ingredient.

The most significant problem with patent medicine is that the individuals developing and marketing these products usually maintained no solid educational or research credentials. Instead, independent entrepreneurs would establish unsupervised “compounding” facilities, where development of these elixirs and formulas would occur. These medicines were then advertised in many magazines, retail stores and sales catalogs. Even Wards and Sears devoted a great deal of catalog space for the sale of these products which brought both firms considerable profit from interested buyers. In fact, the 1900 census indicated that consumers all over the country spent a combined \$59 million on patent medicines (eNotes, 2012). Comparatively, in today’s economy, this would represent expenditures of <https://assignbuster.com/drug-store-drugstore-and-pharmacy-history/>

approximately 1.5 billion dollars (Friedman, 2010). Clearly, patent medicine was very big business both for the seller and the various retailers distributing these products.

Right around 1905, many journalists began to publicize the potential health risks of patent medicines in order to inform the public. This was a very courageous activity since there were many people in society that not only trusted in these products, but also had much profit potential at risk because of this negative publicity. At the same time, major respected retailers were making significant sales revenues on patent medicine and had much power in society. However, these journalists worked as the catalyst for establishing the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906 which established regulations in labeling of patent medicines to prevent fraud or inaccurate promises that could not be justified through the formulations in various elixirs and potions.

During this period in history, there was also a growing drug dependency problem arising in the middle class due to reliance on their favorite patent medicines containing narcotics. Having addicts created by patent medicines was not only bad for society, but it was also bad for other businesses not involved in elixir retailing and distribution. It very quickly became clear to a growing scientific community and pharmacological researchers that patent medicines were causing more long-term harm than good, which led to a gradual removal of these products from the consumer market. Thanks to the efforts of period journalists, researchers and concerned citizens, potentially toxic products making many false statements about potential health benefits disappeared from household shelves.

References

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