

FLORA FAUNA NEWS

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REDISCOVERING ANCIENT HEALING THROUGH THE DOCTRINE OF SIGNATURES

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I have always believed that the cure for what ails you or your animals can be found in nature. I have never thought a manmade chemical substance was the best option due to concerns about foreign substances and the risk of altering healthy cells. Natural ingredients can work with the body and leave it naturally. Do we really think chemical substances work in harmony with the body? Native Americans were very successful in utilizing nature to cure ailments and diseases; otherwise, there would not have been so many Native Americans in the early days of settlement. They were stewards of natural medicine. For thousands of years, humans have looked to nature to provide medicine for a wide range of ailments. But how did our ancestors know which plants to pick?

The “doctrine of signatures” is a historical belief that the appearance of a plant, such as its shape or color, can indicate which part of the human body it can be used to treat. This suggests that nature provides visual clues about a plant’s medicinal properties by resembling the body part it can heal; for example, a plant with a root that looks like a kidney might be used to treat kidney ailments.

The writings of Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) spread the doctrine of signatures. He suggested that God marked objects with a sign, or “signature,” for their purpose. Plants with parts resembling human body parts, animals, or other objects were believed to be relevant to those parts, animals, or objects.

Before modern medicine, one of the most practiced forms of natural medicine was based on the doctrine of signatures. The earliest documentation of this was in the early 14th century by Paracelsus, who stated, “Nature marks each growth...according to its curative benefit.” He taught that plants reminiscent of a part of the body or a symptom of disease are a sign that the plant is useful in treating afflictions of that part or condition. However, science later discovered that many plants with medicinal qualities have no relation to the shape or color of their structure. Bradley Bennet discusses this essentially self-fulfilling prophecy in his essay, “Doctrine of Signatures: An Explanation of Medicinal Plant Discovery or Dissemination of Knowledge?” In essence, the medicinal use for a plant was discovered, and people began to find similarities between that plant and the human form. So perhaps these were not signatures of the plant but of the humans using them.

Lichens did not escape this doctrine of signatures. For many years, various lichens were tested as treatments for ailments such as jaundice, rabies, and even hair loss. However, the only treatment that retained any value was Lungwort. The lobes of the lichen and its lung-like appearance made it seem like an ideal treatment for respiratory problems such as asthma and pneumonia.

Lungwort was tested for its medicinal uses and has proven to have compounds effective against tuberculosis bacteria. Many different lichens were scanned for medicinal purposes, and it has been found that about 50% of lichen species have antibiotic properties.

The concept of “you are what you eat” plays a crucial role in managing chronic diseases. Therefore, it is important to know what you eat and how it impacts your body. It is quite difficult to eat healthily under stressful situations. The doctrine of signatures indicates that having healthy snacks such as walnuts regularly may improve brain health and reduce the risks of heart disease and cancer. Studies suggest that the doctrine of signatures could be the future for the development of effective drugs and reducing chronic illnesses.

Our research and development will continue on the path of discovery in the world of medicinal plants, especially lichens.

NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN INVENTIONS



- Syringes
- Early Vaccinations
- Pain relievers
- Electrolyte Rehydration
- Baby Bottles and Formula
- Sunscreen



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