

ELY AND DISTRICT U3A History Group

Presentation Jan 2014

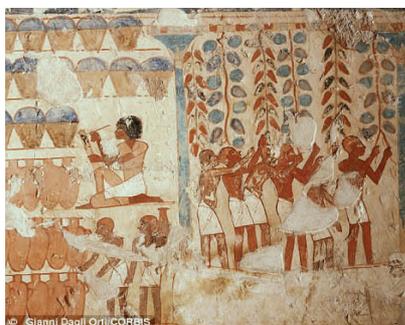
A History of Pharmaceuticals

The first part of the talk gave an overview of the topic and described how medicines were used from ancient civilisations up to the 19th century. Infectious diseases were the main killers and the search to understand their causes was of paramount importance. It was not until the nineteenth century that germ theory and the mechanisms of infection were established and this led to great improvements in hospital hygiene, sewage treatment etc with a corresponding decrease in the incidence of infectious diseases such as cholera and typhoid. Then, in 1929, a breakthrough came with Fleming's discovery of penicillin and this was followed ten years later by its re-discovery and development by Florey and Chain, leading to widespread clinical use.

The twentieth century saw huge advances in medicine including the use of insulin for treatment of diabetes, and the discovery and use of steroids. The 'blockbuster' drugs of the 1970s and 1980s gave us effective medicines to treat a wide range of diseases including heart disease, asthma, and stomach ulcers. The management of mental illness was pretty brutal up to the 1950s but the successful introduction of medicines for schizophrenia were followed by release of the benzodiazepines and the 'SSRI' antidepressants such as Prozac and, properly used, this range of drugs has had a huge positive impact on many people's lives.

The invention and marketing of new drugs was put into context by a brief history of drug regulation and an overview of the process, costs and timescale of introducing a new drug. The talk ended with some thoughts on major medical problems still not fully understood or treated and where future pharmaceutical developments might take us.

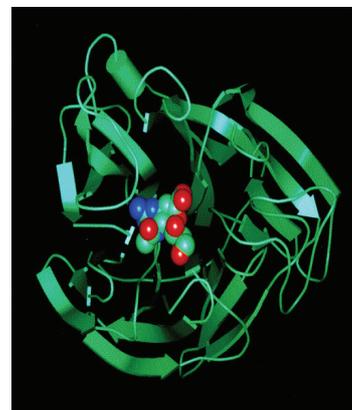
David Latham



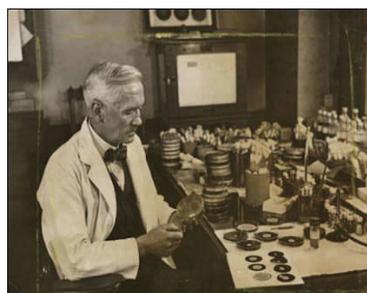
Egyptian wall paintings showing Medicinal herbs



Apothecary's shop



Drug-receptor interaction



Alexander Fleming



Treating Asthma

