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Fight Against COVID-19. Central African Republic 2020

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From the Editor's Desk

Pharmacognosy is the branch of knowledge concerned with medicinal drugs obtained from plants or other natural sources and that are used not only in traditional herbal medicine, but also in providing molecular models for development of new drugs. Approximately 50% of prescription drugs are based on a molecule that occurs naturally in a plant including such prominent drugs as penicillin, morphine, codeine, quinine, artemisinin, and digoxin. Many plants have been used and cultivated by humans at least since the dawn of recorded history and have provided not only food and shelter, but also aids in combating illness.

One of my favorite areas of medical philately is medicinal plants shown on postage stamps, perhaps because I am an avid gardener and grow a number of herbs that my wife and I use in cooking. Using hoop tunnels we have been able to grow perennial herbs throughout the year here in New Jersey.

On pages 43 and 44 of this issue I am illustrating recent postal issues featuring medicinal plants from several different countries.

On another note, there have been an increasing number of stamps being issued related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The one from the Central African Republic that is illustrated on this issue's cover is particularly interesting to me and if you look closely, you can see a wide variety of subjects related to what we have been suffering through for over a year.

Another issue that I liked is the one from the Czech Republic shown here illustrating protective face masks. The pair were issued on June 24, 2020 as a tribute to workers fighting the pandemic.



Welcome to New Members

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Norman F. Jacobs
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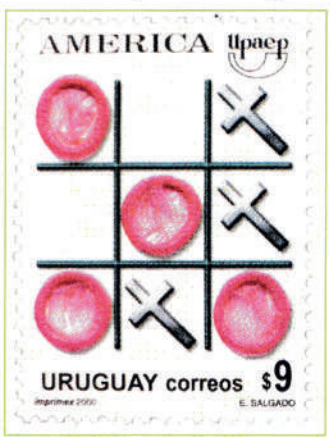
History of Condom Use

By Ahmet D. Ataman, M.Pekesen, E.Vatanoglu (Turkey)

For most of their history, condoms have been used both as a method of birth control, and as a protective measure against sexually transmitted diseases and have been made from a variety of materials. Prior to the 19th century, chemically treated linen and animal tissue (intestine or bladder) are the best documented varieties. Rubber condoms gained popularity in the mid-19th century, and in the early 20th century major advances were made in manufacturing techniques.(1) Prior to the introduction of the combined oral contraceptive pill, condoms were the most popular birth control method in the Western world. In the second half of the 20th century, the low cost of condoms contributed to their importance in family planning programs throughout the developing world. Condoms have also become increasingly important in efforts to fight the AIDS pandemic. The oldest condoms ever excavated were found in a cesspit located in the grounds of Dudley Castle and were made from animal membrane. The condoms dated back to as early as 1642. (2)

Whether condoms were used in ancient civilizations is debated by archaeologists and historians. Societies in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome preferred small families and are known to have practiced a variety of birth control methods. However, these societies viewed birth control as a woman's responsibility, and the only well-documented contraception methods were female-controlled devices (both possibly effective, such as pessaries, and ineffective, such as amulets). The writings of these societies contain "veiled references" to male-controlled contraceptive methods that might have been condoms, but most historians interpret them as referring to coitus interruptus or anal intercourse.(3)

The loincloths worn by Egyptian and Greek laborers were very sparse, sometimes consisting of little more than a covering for the glans of the penis. Records of these types of loincloths being worn by men in higher classes have made some historians speculate they were worn during intercourse; others, however, are doubtful of such interpretations. (2)



Tic-tac-toe Game with Condoms & Crosses. Uruguay 2000 [America issue - Fight Against AIDS]



Wrapped & unrapped condoms, condom with face. Cambodia 2011 [Fight Against AIDS]





Cancellations from Romania and India

Contraceptives fell out of use in Europe after the decline of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century. The use of contraceptive pessaries, for example, is not documented again until the 15th century. (3) If condoms were used during the Roman Empire, knowledge of them may have been lost during its decline. In the writings of Muslims and Jews during the Middle Ages, there are some references to attempts at male-controlled contraception, including suggestions to cover the penis in tar or soak it in onion juice. Some of these writings might describe condom use, but they are "oblique", "veiled", and "vague". (1)

The first condoms

Condoms have been with us for thousands of years, but the original condoms probably weren't all that good for safe sexual intercourse. The first documented use of a condom in Europe was in 1564 by the Catholic priest and anatomist Gabriele Fallopio (1523-1562), who also gave his name to fallopian tubes. (4)

History of Condom Use *(cont.)*

By Ahmet D. Ataman, M.Pekesen, E.Vatanoglu (Turkey)

In the 16th century condoms were used primarily to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Syphilis, for example, was often very dangerous ending up with death and raged through Europe for over 300 years. But with the discovery of spermatozoa in the 17th century, the Church became outraged over the use of barriers impeding their progress. By the 18th century, the condom's reputation amongst medical professionals had firmly been cemented as a tool for philanderers, prostitutes and the immoral. (5)



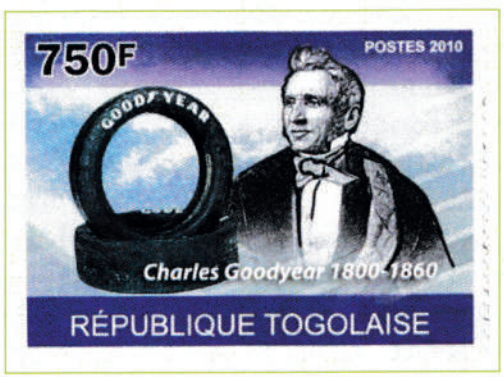
Gabriele Fallopio. Ukraine 2018 [Personalized stamp]

Despite this, they proved quite popular among the upper and middle classes. The working classes finally gained access to condoms in the 19th century, with Charles Goodyear's (1800-1860) discovery of vulcanized rubber in 1839.

Animal membrane has been used to make condoms for hundreds of years In Japan and China, condoms were in use before the 15th century. In the former, condoms were made of tortoiseshell and, later, thin leather. In China they were made out of oiled paper or lamb intestines. They didn't differ much from condoms in 18th-century Europe, which were made out of linen or animal intestine. (4)



Goodyear cancellation. Italy 1972



Charles Goodyear, 150th anniversary of death. Togo 2010

Female condoms

The first female condom was reputed to have been used over 2,000 years ago in Ancient Greece. As the result of a curse, King Minos ejaculated snakes and scorpions, which usually killed his partners. Finally his physician came up with the idea of inserting the bladder of a goat into his lovers, thus catching all the poisonous beasts before they could do any damage. (6)

Although this story may not be true, what is true is that British author Marie Stopes (1880-1958), a 20th century birth-control activist and supporter of positive eugenics, promoted one of the first female condoms in 1923. It was made of thick, vulcanized rubber with a steel coil rim. Like other rubber contraceptives at the time, it could be washed and reused. (6)



Marie Stopes. Great Britain 2008

The first modern female condom was released in 1993 and from the start suffered a promotion problem. Women found it strange to look at, difficult to insert, and feared it 'rustled' during use. The media were generally disinterested in its many advantages and instead chose to ridicule it to their audience. (5)

In 1998 things started to change. The manufacturer Wisconsin Pharmacal received a petition from Zimbabwe signed by 30,000 women asking for the condom to be made available in their country. As the developed world was deriding it, the developing world had sat up in attention. In places where women had little access to medical care and little bodily agency, a condom that was female-controlled, could be inserted many hours before sex and be safely reused found itself a home. (4)

Origin of the word condom

Where the name 'condom' came from, no one knows. It could have come from a town in France i.e. Condom, a commune in southwest France); it could have been named after a physician to King Charles II; it



Condom with wings. Serbia 2004 Postal tax stamp [Fight Against AIDS]



Solidarity - Wrapped condom. Belgium 1995 proof [Surtax for fight against AIDS]



"Condom Protects Against AIDS". Tanzania 1997 [World AIDS Day]

could have originated in the Latin language. There is no real agreement on its etymology. What is known is that 'condum' was first penned in a poem in 1706 and, later, 'condon' turned up in a literary journal in 1709. The rest of the time, the humble condom has been known by many different names, such as the male sheath, gloves, armour, the English riding coat, French letter and machine. (5)

Both Casanova and the Marquis de Sade wrote about condoms. The former said that the inventor 'must have been a good man.' Freud wasn't a fan, although he felt it was preferable to coitus interruptus. Jane Austen recommended separate beds over any sort of contraception. The Catholic Church only grudgingly accepted the use of condoms in 2010 and then only to prevent serious disease, such as HIV (6).



Postcard showing Casanova testing his condom for holes.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, both the female condom and the regular condom are going through a revolution. The female condom market has suddenly become competitive, which means women may have more choices in the future.

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