Laudanum Encyclopedia Article

Laudanum

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Laudanum

Laudanum refers to a tincture of OPIUM—an alcoholic extract (about 20%) of opium, which contains approximately 10 milligrams per milliliter of morphine. If used at all currently, it would be as an antidiarrheal. The solution is more concentrated than PAREGORIC, and smaller volumes are given; however, their actions are almost identical. At standard doses, they rapidly and effectively treat diarrhea without producing euphoria or analgesia. The solution does contain MORPHINE and other opioid alkaloids and, at higher doses, it can be abused—as it was during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when it was sold widely as a tonic and cure-all, in shops, by mail order, and by traveling medicine shows. Laudanum use and abuse are often mentioned in novels and plays of and about the period.

Laudanum, Cistus ladanifer, *in flower.* (© Eric and David Hosking/CORBIS)

See Also

Dover's Powder)

Bibliography

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