

Mushrooms in the Polish pharmacopoeias (XIX-XX c)

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In the traditional popular culture there are over ten different varieties of mushrooms growing in the Polish territory that are in use. A few of them used to be utilised as medicines. The official science doesn't reflect this use. Only four species of mushrooms are described in seven studied Polish pharmacopoeias from the XIX and XX centuries: two polypores, medicinal yeast and ergot.

In the first Polish pharmacopoeia - *Pharmacopoeia Regni Poloniae* published in 1817 *Boletus igniarius* and *Boletus laricis* were described.

In the military pharmacopoeia - *Pharmacopoeia Castrensis Polonica* (1831) was mentioned only one mushroom - *Boletus igniarius*.

In the Hospital Pharmacopoeia - *Pharmacopoeia Nosocomialis* (1st edition 1831, 2nd 1860) were mentioned - *Boletus igniarius* and *Secale cornutum* as well as a formula for *Decoctum Secalis cornutum* was inserted.

In the second edition of Polish pharmacopoeia *Farmakopea Polska II* (1937) were described two fungi - *Secale cornutum* and *Faex medicinalis* as well as the preparations: *Extractum Secalis cornutum siccum*, *Extractum Secalis cornutum fluidum* and *Extractum Faecis*.

Similarly was in the third edition (1954)

Boletus igniarius (syn. *Fomes fomentarius*)

Polypore growing on stems of beeches, oaks and ashes. From fructifications were received slices, which were used as dressings for stanching (*Pharmacopoeia Regni Poloniae*, 1817, 7; *Pharmacopoeia Castrensis Polonica*, 1831, 54; *Hospital Pharmacopoeia*, 1860, 25).

Boletus laricis (syn. *Agaricum*, *Laricifomes officinalis*)

Polypore growing on stems of larches. Powdered fructifications were used as a laxative or antiperspirant. *Boletus laricis* contains active constituent - agaricin (*Pharmacopoeia Regni Poloniae*, 1817, 7-8).

Secale cornutum - rel ergot spore

Fungus parasitizing on the ears of corn. Ergot preparations were used in gynecology and peripheral blood vessel diseases, as well as in haemorrhages in consumptives. In the folk medicine it was used as an abortive and antibaernorrhagic agent.

Active constituents:

- macromolecular alkaloids (ergotamine, ergotoxine) insoluble in water; able to evoke strong contraction of peripheral vessel; display weak action on the uterus;
- micromolecular alkaloides (ergometrine), soluble in water; do not evoke a contraction of peripheral blood vessels; display strong and quick contraction activity on the uterus (*Hospital Pharmacopoeia* 1860, 33; *Polish Pharmacopoeia II*, 1946, 773-774; *Polish Pharmacopoeia III*, 1954, 197-200, 226-229, 548-550).

Faex medicinalis (syn. *Fermentum cerevisiae*) - Yeast

Yeast were used in the treatment of digestive system disorders, in nervous exhaustion and in dermal diseases. Yeast were also used as auxiliary substance in a dispensing.

Active constituents: enzymes and vitamins (*Polish Pharmacopoeia*

II, 1946, 315-316, 337. Polish Pharmacopoeia III, 1954, 213, 233).

Nowadays, fungi are not recognised as medicinal raw materials. The fourth (1965-70) and fifth (1990-1993) editions of pharmacopoeia included descriptions of only synthetic compounds derived from alkaloids of ergot (Polish Pharmacopoeia IV, vol. 2, 1970, 286-

290, 306-308. Polish Pharmacopoeia V vol. 2, 1993, 247-248, 265-267).

But in the XIX-th c. official medicine unlike the folk medicine use other fungi: *Amanita muscaria*, *Lycoperdon bovista*, *Fungus cervinus*, *Fungus salicis*, etc. These mushrooms were not described in the Polish pharmacopoeias from XIX-th and XX-th centuries.