

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE

FOLK MEDICINE

You can help us to preserve the folklore of Newfoundland.

This traditional material is part of the unwritten history of the province which the university is attempting to record.

Every community is rich in many areas of folklore, so if you have any information on the subjects in which we are interested or can get it from someone else, please find answers for our questions.

General Instructions.

1. Write down the information exactly as you learned it or as it was told to you. Use the exact words and phrasing of the informant. Do not attempt to 'correct' the form of the information.
2. Write in black or blue ink, or type (double-spaced).
3. Write on one side of the paper only.
4. Number pages in the upper right hand corner.
5. Complete the following information requested at the end of each item, as illustrated.

Informant's name	age	occupation	
Home community	Bay	religion	
Learned from	community	relationship	
When			
Student's name	age	Course number	Home community
St. John's address	Date		

6. Indicate clearly if you or your informant want any names withheld.

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in cooperation with _____

FOLK MEDICINE

In Newfoundland, as in most areas of the world, people have their own cures for many ailments. This is especially true in areas where professional medical care is not available.

We are interested in obtaining as much information as possible about the whole subject of Folk Medicine in your community and will appreciate your help.

Please do not hesitate to give information for which we have not asked as we have not covered everything pertaining to Folk Medicine in this questionnaire.

Wherever possible give what information you are able to obtain in the exact words of the informant, and, if possible, give a case history. An example is attached: see page 5.

FOLK MEDICINE

PART I

1. Are (or were) there people in your community who could charm specific ailments? Who were they? (Person born after father's death? Woman whose married name is the same as her maiden name? Seventh son? [see no. 3]) Give accounts of their work.

Were there both men and women charmers? Was the power to charm passed on to others? If so, how? Did preachers or priests have power to cure? Was charming done publicly or in secret?

Were words, written messages, or prayers used? Describe any special actions or gestures used.
2. Are (or were) there special objects used as charms to prevent or cure ailments? Describe how they were used (worn, carried, etc.)
3. Was there a seventh son or seventh daughter in your hometown area? Did he or she have special power? Where did it come from? How did other people know he had it? How did he use it?
4. Describe the work of the midwife in your community. Was she ever known by some other name? Was there more than one? Was she paid for her services? What was the nature of the payment (for example, cash, potatoes, etc.)?

What did the midwife do in preparation for the birth? What did she do for the baby after delivery? for the mother?

How long would the midwife stay in the patient's home? Did she do any household chores? If so, explain.
5. Give an account of any emergency amputation (or other operation, including tooth extraction) performed in your area when a doctor was not available? Who performed it? Where? How? What instruments were used?

Was there someone who stitched cuts? What was used and how was it done? Was murr (myrrh) from trees or any other substance used to stop bleeding? Describe how.
6. Did your community have people who could set bones? Where did they get such power? Describe the bonesetter's method.
7. What teas, tonics, or poultices, etc. were used locally? What were they made from (plants, herbs, barks, etc.)? How were they made? What were they used for? If a "firm cure" did not work, why didn't it work? What was done instead?

Write down any remarks or comments made by the informant about each charm, cure, etc.

We would be pleased to get any sayings or stories about sickness, cures, charms, or charmers.

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PART II

Describe the preventives or cures for as many of the following as you can. This is only a partial list so please feel free to give the cures for any ailment not included.

If an ailment is not given the name in your community that we have listed, please give the local name. (For example, people call Pleurisy "stitches").

Tell if the cure is taken internally, applied externally, worn, or carried.

For each, give the full description as given you by the informant, and a case history where possible.

Abscess	Fainting	Neuralgia
Arthritis	Festering	Nightmare (old hag)
Asthma	Fever	Nose bleed
	Fits (spells)	
Bedsores	Freckles	Piles
Bites (animal, human, or insect)	Frostbite	Pleurisy
Bladder trouble		Pneumonia
Bleeding	Gall stones	Rheumatism
Blindness (ice, snow, night, etc.)	Gum boils	Ringworm
Blisters	Hay fever	Rising
Blood poisoning	Headache	Rupture
Boils	Hearburn	
Burns and scalds	Hiccough	Sea sickness
	Hives	Sleep walking
		Snoring
Car sickness	Ice blindness	Snow blindness
Chapping	Indigestion	Sore eyes
Chilblains	Infection	Sore throat
Choking	Ingrowing toe nail	Sores
Club feet		Sprain
Colds and coughs	Kidney trouble	Sprayed (wind burn)
Constipation	(water trouble)	Sting
Corns		Sty in eye (west)
Cramps	Lice	Sunburn
Cuts	Lock jaw	
	Leg cramps	Toothache (or face ache)
Diarrhoea	Loss of appetite	
Dislocated hips	Lumbago	Warts
Dizzy spells		Water pups
	Measles	Whooping cough
Earaches	Mumps	Wind (gas)
Eye ailments		Worms

FOLK MEDICINE

EXAMPLE

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"Cure for the Nose Bleed"

At the age of twelve, I had Chicken Pox. It resulted in me having the nose bleed very frequently. My Grandmother suggested that my mother get the "firm cure", as she called it for me.

A distant relative was to ask a non-relative for a piece of green ribbon, green because it meant good health. The person had to be a non-relative because it was feared that blood relation would only make the condition worse.

The ribbon could be of any length or width, whatever the person desired, and had to be worn around the neck. It was not to be removed at any time, not even to wash it.

I was not to pay or even thank the person who gave it to me. I was not permitted to have any conversation with the person at this time. These precautions were taken because it was feared that any direct connections would destroy the strength of the ribbon's charm.

When the ribbon rotted or broke accidentally, the bleeding was considered cured.

Within an hour after I started to wear the ribbon the bleeding stopped. Since then I have never had any sign of the nose bleed.

I am not prepared to say the ribbon cured my condition but the bleeding stopped -- which gives rise to speculation.

From Mrs. Penelope Smith, about 39, my mother, housewife, Deep Harbour, South Coast. U.C.

She learned it from her neighbour, Mrs. Yvonne Jones, Deep Harbour, who heard it there from her parents about 1945 to 1949.

Collected by John X. Smith, 22 (Eng. 340), Fork Cove, Blue Bay.
927 Elizabeth Ave., St. John's 22 September, 1969

(Item courtesy Bobbie Fillier; names and places here are fictitious: Collectors are requested to give actual names and places, with the understanding that names will not be disclosed without specific permission.)

The example given here is provided as an illustration of the kind and amount of detail that makes a report valuable.

Give the cure and a case history.