

Hirudo medicinalis is the commonly used species of leech in both Britain and the USA, and is reared on specialist leech farms. If required, stockists will dispatch a consignment by express delivery. In hospitals with large plastic surgery departments, where leeches are sometimes used, the pharmacy will keep a small stock available for immediate use. They are easily kept in a muslin covered glass or plastic tank of water at 20°C and will live up to a year without feeding provided the water is changed regularly.

The leeches were obtained by express delivery from Biopharm, a leech farm in Swansea.

We thank Mr J Thomsitt for permission to report on this patient and Ms Karen Jones for photography.

- 1 Rao P, Bailie FB, Bailey BN. Leechmania in microsurgery. *Practitioner* 1985; 229: 901-3.
- 2 Kraemer BA, Korber KE, Aquino TI, Engleman A. Use of leeches in plastic and reconstructive surgery: a review. *J Reconstr Microsurg* 1988; 4: 381-6.
- 3 Adams SL. The medicinal leech. A page from the annelids of internal medicine. *Ann Intern Med* 1988; 109: 399-405.
- 4 Bunker TD. The contemporary use of the medicinal leech. *Injury* 1981; 12: 430-2.
- 5 Whitlock MR, O'Hare PM, Sanders R, Morrow NC. The medicinal leech and its use in plastic surgery: a possible cause for infection. *Br J Plast Surg* 1983; 36: 240-4.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

A Fifteenth Century English translation of John of Arderne's *de Cura Oculorum*
By R R James, Woodbridge

John of Arderne was the first of a long line of celebrated English surgeons. He was born in 1307 and was in practice at Newark-on-Trent from 1349 to 1370. In the latter year he moved to London and in 1377 he wrote his booklet which forms the subject of this paper. We do not know the date of his death, nor do we know where he learnt his art. In one of his writings he describes himself as 'chirurgus inter medicos', and in another as 'cirurgicorum minimus'; but he was evidently in extensive practice and his writings cover a very large field. Perhaps his best work was on fistula-in-ano, piles and rectal cancer. This displays great powers of observation and is well documented with case records. It is decidedly original. The same cannot be said of his treatise on the cure of the eyes; it is for the most part a compilation from the work of others, notably Lanfranc. Ophthalmologically it is worthless, but not without interest.

A precious oynement for bleryed yene and watery. Take a clene holowgh basyne & anoynt it with inne with buttere dat is not salt and afterward whelwe de basyne uppone a vessell dat a mannys uryne is inne, tarte & hote & so let it stande styll tyll it be colde. Afterward that schalbe taken dat cleuyd withinne to de basyne de weche is blewysse of colour & ther schalbe putte therto a litill of de grece of a caponne & des schalbe wele medlyd togydere ayene de sounne & thanne boxe it.

With dis oynement de yelydys schulbe anoyntyd mediocrelly with a lytyll slice at eve whane he goth to

bedde & bynde it with a bonde tyll one de morowe.

This oynement cureth beste above alle de medicines in de wordle de bleryed yene & de waterynge yene as wele in crokeiden as in oder, de weche I have often tymes provyd *per certo*. And after Johannem Damascenum in alle de sorowe of de yene & ayenst defawte of de syghte ffurste it behoveth dyligently to consydre wheyther it be of hote cause or of colde, & yf it be of hote cause furste de mater scalbe deffyd *cum surupo acetoso* III dayes or IIII. And whanne de mater is dygeste ther schall thane be yoven furste a clystere mollificatyff de mor*.

That schall devoyd all de body & dat schall be done with $\frac{v}{2}$ · 1 · of de a lectuarye made of de juse of rosys & made scharpe with Dyagredye. And thanne thou mayst sywerly werke with diverse remedyes in de seyde places after that de semeth to spede.

In colde cause de mater also schall furste be deffyd cum oximell diuretico i squillitico & thane ferdermore de clysterye schalbe yoven as it is aforseyde & by de morowe alle de body schalbe purgyd cum $\frac{v}{2}$ from Jorapige Gale†. And afterwarde he schall procede fourth sywerly to de places of remedy & spede wele . . .

Here ends the Ms. of the cure of the eyes.

†The hierapicra of Galen.

To my regret I have not been able to compare the proof with the original, and so some errors in 15th century spelling have probably crept in.

Br J Ophthalmol 1941; 25: 526-35.