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MEDICINE AND THE BODY
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STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA

CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS

MEDICINE ON THE MARGINS OF COLONIAL MEXICO

30 SEPTEMBER 2024

5.00 pm CET

GALENIC PHARMACY IN HOME-MADE REMEDIES

PAULA DE VOS • San Diego State University

In my study of Galenic pharmacy, I have argued that this tradition developed over a series of stages, one of which involved its transport to the Americas under the Spanish Empire. Its presence in the thoroughly Hispanized cities of central Mexico, I have argued, conformed closely to the Galenic tradition. But what about medical practice outside the urban centers of New Spain? How did Galenic pharmacy fare in the largely indigenous

rural areas of the Mexico's altiplano region and beyond? As the Spanish colonial establishment spread beyond the urban environment, setting up encomiendas, hospitals, mines, presidios, and missions outside the colonial core region, how did the Galenic tradition interact with the Nahuatl and other indigenous medical traditions and pharmaceutical practices already in place? In this paper I explore a series of texts of

“rustic medicine” containing recipes for home-made pharmaceutical remedies that could be prepared in places “where there is no pharmacy.” These texts were authored largely by religious friars from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century and incorporated both indigenous and Galenic ideas, materials, and practices. Though indigenous materia medica constituted a significant part of the tradition, nevertheless, the majority of medicines were Galenic, transplanted from Afro-Eurasia and subsequently appropriated within this rustic tradition and still utilized in modern curanderismo (healing practices).