



Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain

MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN
1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN

INFORMATION SHEET: 5

SUPPOSITORIES, PESSARIES AND BOUGIES

SOME MEDICINES ARE FORMULATED TO BE USED IN THE BODY CAVITIES: THE SUPPOSITORY FOR THE RECTUM), THE PESSARY (FOR THE VAGINA) AND THE BOUGIE (FOR THE URETHRA OR NOSE).

HISTORY

Suppositories, pessaries and bougies have been prescribed for the last 2000 years but their popularity as a medicinal form increased from around 1840 - suppositories for constipation, haemorrhoids and later as an alternative method of drug administration, pessaries for vaginal infections and bougies for infections of the urethra, prostate, bladder or nose.

MANUFACTURE

The basic method of manufacture was the same for each preparation, the shape differed. Suppositories were "bullet" or "torpedo" shaped, pessaries "bullet" shaped but larger and bougies long and thin, tapering slightly.

A *base* was required that would melt at body temperature. Various oils and fats have been utilised but, until the advent of modern manufactured waxes, the substances of choice were theobroma oil (cocoa butter) and a glycerin-gelatin mixture.

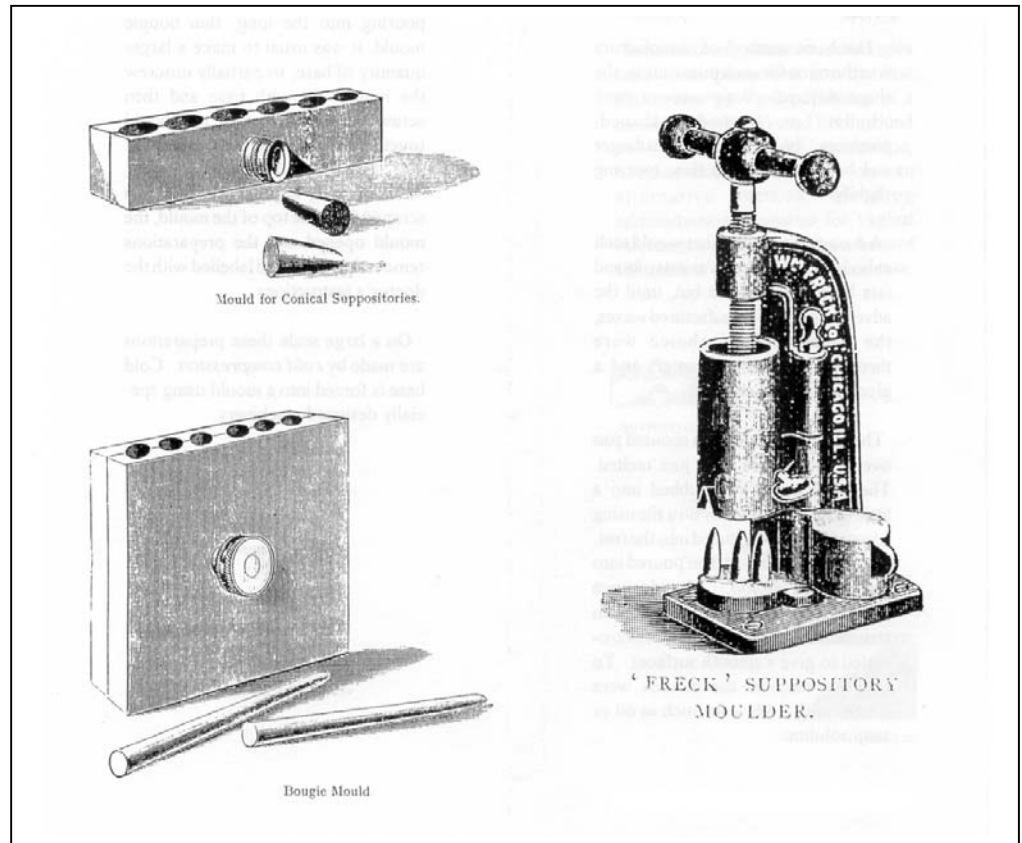
The base was heated in a spouted pan over a water-bath until just melted. The medicament was rubbed into a little of the base (usually on a tile using a spatula) and then stirred into the rest. The melted mass was then poured into the relevant *mould*. Moulds were normally in two parts, made from stainless steel or brass (silver or electroplated to give a smooth surface). To facilitate removal the moulds were treated with a lubricant such as oil or soap solution.

To overcome the difficulty of pouring into the long, thin bougie mould, it was usual to make a larger quantity of base, to partially unscrew the mould, fill with base and then screw the two halves of the mould together thus forcing out the excess.

When cool, any excess base was scraped from the top of the mould, the mould opened and the preparations removed, packed and labelled with the doctor's instructions.



On a large scale these preparations are made' by *cold compression*. Cold base is forced into a mould using specially designed machinery.



Illustrations from *Bentley's Textbook of Pharmaceutics*

© P G Homan FRPharmS MCPP 2002

The illustration overleaf is from a Society postcard and illustrates the plant from which Theobroma Oil is extracted.
THEOBROMA CACAO L. Hand-coloured copper engraving from J J Plenck's *Icones Plantarum Medicinalium*,
C.VI, Tab 578 (Vienna 1794)

This information sheet is also available in a large font size.
Please contact us on 020 7572 2210 or email museum@rpsqb.org.