Health through the ages – Warwickshire-style

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A wealth of fascinating information and objects, found in county museum collections and historical records, is to be brought together in what is being billed as a 12-month celebration of the history of health and medicine in Warwickshire. The project has been made possible by a £32,600 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The project will create a temporary exhibition in Market Hall Museum this summer and a travelling exhibition that will visit up to 30 venues throughout the county with the aim of encouraging a wider audience to take an interest in local heritage. Five primary and five secondary schools will also be involved with educational sessions that link aspects of the project to history, food, wellbeing and health.

Among the artefacts that will feature in the exhibitions are a range of objects from the county museum's social history collection including items once found in chemist's shops, a 19th century 'cupping set' used for bloodletting – a common treatment for a range of ailments in Victorian times – and fossils which were ground into power and used to treat a variety of conditions.

Documents held by the County Record Office include reports from official bodies including hospital boards, 'lunatic' asylums and health commissioners with town maps showing the need for proper sanitation. A unique collection from the archives looks at the history of Royal Leamington Spa.

Through the involvement of schools young people will be able to contribute to the exhibition material and local communities will be invited to contribute to a blog their own information handed down through their families about food recipes and medicinal remedies. This information will be translated by volunteers into English from languages such as Polish and Urdu so that local ethnic minority communities can also become involved in the project.

Anne Jenkins, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands said: "Health and medical practices continue to fascinate people and this project is an imaginative means of introducing a very wide audience of all age groups to the wealth of material held within county museums and records."

Laura Pye, Learning and Community Engagement Manager for Warwickshire County Council's Heritage and Cultural Services said: "This project is a great opportunity for heritage and culture, libraries, the youth services and schools to work together to explore the history of health in Warwickshire. It also gives us a unique opportunity to use social media to develop our contemporary collecting."

Further information

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