CHAPTER EIGHT

MEDICINES AND MORTALITY

Medical practice in sixteenth-century Spain was dominated by the views of Galen and Hippocrates, which during the Renaissance received renewed interest as humanist scholars turned back to Ancient Greece for their inspiration and began to examine the original Greek sources. Galen and Hippocrates saw illness as a function of an imbalance in the humours or fluids—blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile—which, like all substances, were regarded as hot or cold, moist or dry.¹ Hence blood was hot and wet, phlegm cold and wet, yellow bile hot and dry and black bile cold and dry. An imbalance in the humours could be redressed through diet, purging, vomiting, and bleeding.

In Spanish America humoral medicine spread to become the most popular form of medicine practised. George Foster writes of humoral medicine ‘filtering down’ from the professional to the popular level through hospitals, pharmacies, popular recetarios (books of prescriptions) and the work of the religious orders.² The influence of humoral medicine is evident in the texts available to doctors in the New World. The Inquisition routinely inspected all ships arriving in Cartagena to ensure that they were not carrying any heretical literature, including books written by some empirics, such as Paracelsus and Vesalius.³ Nevertheless, the variety of texts available in the New World was greater than might be supposed. In the early seventeenth century the medical library of the Jesuit monastery of San Pablo in Lima was dominated by medical books from Spain, but also included a large number of texts on different branches of medicine published

² Foster, Hippocrates’ Latin American Legacy, 147–59.
³ AHNM 4816 Ramo 3 no 32 fols. 1–102 Testimonio de las visitas de navíos de negros 1634–1635.
in Italy and France. It included the great pharmacopoeias of Luis de Oviedo and Juan de Castillo that were widely used in Spain at the time, but also Girolamo Mercuriale’s *De compositione medicamentorum* published in Venice in 1590. The last may have been brought by the Italian Jesuit pharmacist, Augustino Salumbrino, who arrived at the College in 1605 and established a pharmacy intended to supply other Jesuit colleges and haciendas throughout the Viceroyalty. Books on surgery included *Thesoro de la verdadera cirugía y vía particular contra la común* [1604] by the progressive surgeon Bartolomé Hidalgo, as well as *Primera y segunda parte de la cirugía universal del cuerpo humano* [1587] by Juan Calvo. Italian authors included Giovanni Battista Cortesi, an anatomist from Bologna, Gabrielle Falopio from Padua and Michele Mercati from Milan, and there were also writings by the Parisian anatomist, Jean Riolan. The pharmacy of the hospital of Santa Ana possessed more traditional works including Bernardino de Laredo’s, *Un modus faciendi* (1527), Luis Lobera de Ávila’s, *Banquete de nobles caballeros* (1542 second edition) and a book of Mesué, either the elder or younger.

Individual doctors themselves also possessed medical treatises, particularly those who came from Italy and Flanders. In 1612 the library of a surgeon from Flanders, Alexandre Pérez, who was brought before the Inquisition contained books on surgery by Doctor León, Doctor Hidalgo, Doctor Francisco Díaz, and Doctor Murillo, revealing a

---

4 Luis de Oviedo, * Método de la coleccion, y reposicion de las medicinas simples, de su correccion, y preparacion*, Madrid [1581] and Juan de Castillo, *Pharmacopoea, universa medicamenta in officinis pharmaceuticis usitata complectens, et explicans* (Gadibus: Apud Joannem de Borja) [1622].


7 This would not have been the book by Pedro López de León which was not published until 1628. Possibly it was that of Andrés de León, *Tratados de medicina, cirugía, y anatomía* (Valladolid: Luis Sánchez, 1605).

8 Probably Bartolomé de Agüero Hidalgo, *Thesoro de la verdadera cirugía* [1604].

9 Possibly *Tratado nuevamente impresso, de todas las enfermedades de los riñones, vexiga, y carnosidades de la verga, y urina* (Madrid: F. Sánchez, 1588).

10 AGNL SO CO Ca. 16 doc 194 fols. 1–8 Secuestro de Alexandre Pérez, cirujano, de Flandes, en el pueblo de Yllimo (Saña) 1612. Other items confiscated were two books of remedies, part in Spanish and in Flemish, several boxes containing