Let Food be thy Medicine: New Display at Galter

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In December 2015, Galter Health Sciences Library mounted a new display in the Level 1 atrium display case, entitled "Let Food be thy Medicine." This display brings together rare books and artifacts from the library's Special Collections to illustrate the attitudes and beliefs surrounding food by physicians from the late 17th to the 19th centuries.

"Let Food be thy Medicine" was inspired by the article From the Library's Vault: “There is death in the pot” by Katherine Lattal, which highlighted Friedrich Accum and his 1820 publication Treatise on the Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons. The article assesses the impact of Treatise, which was one of the first pieces of scientific writing to challenge the healthfulness of adulterated or processed food. Galter Library's copy of Accum's Treatise is included in the display.

Also included is A treatise on food and diet, published in 1868 by Jonathan Pereira. Considered the father of pharmacology, Jonathan Pereira used this work to disseminate knowledge on the chemical properties of food, the “digestibility of food,” and diets for different populations.

Featured titles and authors are:

- A treatise on adulterations of food and culinary poisons (1820) by Friedrich Christian Accum (1769-1838)
- A treatise on food and diet (1868) by Jonathan Pereira
- A treatise of all sorts of foods, both animal and vegetable (1745) by Louis Lemery
- Every man his own doctor, compleated with an herbal (1673) by John Archer (active 1660-1684)
- Observations concerning the diet of the common people, recommending a method of living less expensive, and more conducive to health, than the present (1797) by William Buchan (1729-1805)

Visit Galter Library to view and learn more about the unique authors and writings presented in the "Let Food be thy Medicine" display.

To learn more about the rare books and artifacts, the history of medicine and dentistry, and the history of the medical school, contact Galter Health Sciences Library Special Collections at ghsl-specialcollections@northwestern.edu.

And don't forget to check out the inspiration article for the display: From the Library’s Vault: “There is death in the pot.”